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Denison's Select Plays

*Out of
the Stillness*

by
Lindsey Barbee

*T.S.Denison & Company
Publishers · Chicago
Price 35 cents*



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T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers

154 West Randolph Street

CHICAGO

OUT OF THE STILLNESS

Comedy-Drama in Three Acts

BY

LINDSEY BARBEE

AUTHOR OF

"After the Game," "At the End of the Rainbow," "The Dream That Came True," "The Fifteenth of January," "The Kingdom of Heart's Content," "Ruth in a Rush," "Sing a Song of Seniors," "The Spell of the Image," "The Thread of Destiny," "Tomorrow at Ten," "A Trial of Hearts," "A Watch, a Wallet and a Jack of Spades," "When the Clock Strikes Twelve," "The Whole Truth," "In the College Days," "Let's Pretend — A Book of Children's Plays," etc.



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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OUT OF THE STILLNESS

FOR EIGHT MALES AND NINE FEMALES
WITH YOUTHFUL BIRTHDAY GUESTS

CHARACTERS.

(*Named in order of appearance.*)

MARION DEERING	<i>To Whom There Comes a Great Experience</i>
BOBBY DEERING	<i>Her Nephew</i>
AIMEE.....	
BILLY.....	
VIRGINIA.....	
MILES.....	
MARJORY.....	<i>Bobby's Birthday Guests</i>
GEORGE.....	
BETTY.....	
JUNIE.....	
JANE CARROLL	<i>An Artist</i>
LUCY	<i>A Maid</i>
MRS. DEERING	<i>Mother a la Mode</i>
BYRNE SEYMOUR	<i>An Artist</i>
SHERIDAN BLAIR	<i>The Man Next Door</i>
EILEEN DEERING	<i>The Would-be Reformer</i>
NATALIE DEERING	<i>A Young Widow</i>
ALFRED TEVIS...Who Steals Hearts—and Other Things	
AUNT LIZZIE.....	<i>Who Meets the Highwayman</i>
JERRY	<i>The Would-be Reformed</i>
BESS ROBERTS.....	<i>A Guest at the Dinner Dance</i>
TOM MORGAN	<i>Her Escort</i>
CECILE TEVIS..	<i>Quick of Wit—and Wily of Stratagem</i>
HENRY JEROME.....	<i>Who Arrives Unexpectedly</i>
HAMILTON WHITNEY.....	<i>Of the Secret Service</i>

SCENE—*A Summer Home.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*Two Hours and Thirty Minutes.*

ACT I. The hall in Mrs. Deering's country home.
A summer afternoon.

ACT II. Again the hall, but this time facing the
stairway. Three weeks later.

ACT III. Same as Act II. The next morning.

(During the act the curtain is lowered for a moment
to indicate a passage of time.)

STORY OF THE PLAY.

Marion Deering, after the death of her brother in France, refuses to be comforted and grieves because death has raised an insurmountable barrier. So morbid is her attitude that she even refuses to meet John Carey, her brother's best friend, whom he has met and known overseas. In order to be near her, John Carey, under the name of Sheridan Blair, rents the estate adjoining the Deering's summer home and becomes involved in the mysterious proceedings which subsequently develop.

For the Deering house, formerly occupied by a German agent, is said to contain in a secret hiding place a document of great importance to the United States government. For the possession of this document, Alfred Tevis, using his friendship with Natalie Deering, the young widow, as a wedge, becomes a member of the Deering house party and begins a systematic search for the treasure, assisted later on by Cecile Tevis, presumably his sister but in reality his wife. Cecile, acting upon Tevis' suggestion that she throw suspicion on Blair, gives a crystal reading; and, relying upon the old tradition of a resident ghost, attempts to abstract the envelope from its hiding place behind the secret

panel. To her dismay the envelope is missing and Tevis concludes that Blair has turned the trick.

Next morning Blair declares that, at the request of the secret service department, he has been keeping Alfred Tevis under surveillance, and, the head of this department subsequently appearing, Tevis and his wife are accused of the theft of the important document, which, as it is soon discovered, is not in their possession. At the crucial moment Jerry enters. Jerry—who has allowed himself to be regarded as a highwayman and who has been engaged as chauffeur by Eileen, Marion's younger sister, an advocate of reform—has been hidden by Eileen in the room which contains the sliding panel, in order to be safe from a pursuing party. Endeavoring to find a means of escape, he touches the panel, detects the envelope and discovers an opening which resolves itself into a passage, leading into the garden—a passage by which the former German occupant had made his escape. Jerry produces the paper—and the mystery is solved.

In the meantime a great change has come into Marion's life. At the suggestion of Sheridan Blair, who becomes her close friend, she is made to believe that death is no barrier and that a message can be carried from the spirit land; and, feeling that Bob is near, she hears his voice and comes into an infinite peace and serenity. Blair reveals his true identity—and wins her love.

SYNOPSIS FOR PROGRAM.

Act I—The excitement of a birthday party—the thrill of a ghost story—the arrival of the highwayman—and then the stillness of a summer afternoon. Out of the stillness comes—the Voice.

ACT II—The music and merriment of the dinner dance—the hiding place behind the tapestry—the picture in the crystal—and, afterwards, the ghost!

ACT III—The deepening of the mystery—the hand at bridge—the interference of Blair—the sudden appearance of Jerry—and the unexpected climax. Out of the stillness—comes the blessing.

COSTUMES.

In Act I, Marion, Natalie, Jane and Mrs. Deering wear pretty summer gowns, Natalie with a large garden hat; Eileen wears a sport suit; Lucy, a conventional maid costume with white apron and cap. Aunt Lizzie is attired in a linen coat and a small traveling hat. The children all wear dainty summer clothes. Seymour is in black coat, white trousers and turned-in soft shirt; Blair and Tevis are in immaculate summer flannels; Jerry is in riding suit, boots, gauntlets, etc., with a blue-bordered handkerchief prominently featured.

In Act II, Marion, Eileen, Natalie, Cecile and Mrs. Deering are in formal evening gowns, Cecile affecting a style much more extreme and more striking; Aunt Lizzie's gown is high-necked, long-sleeved and built more upon the lines of comfort than elegance; Bobby wears a little summer suit with white socks and slippers. The men are all in evening clothes or Tuxedos save Jerry, who wears a chauffeur's uniform. In Scene II, Cecile is in trailing white robe and veil.

In Act III, Mrs. Deering, Natalie, Marion, Eileen and Aunt Lizzie are in simple morning gowns. Cecile is more ornate and has a long coat, a hat and veil in latter part of the act; Jane wears a simple traveling suit. The men all wear summer morning suits; Bobby is in khaki uniform; Mr. Jerome in Palm Beach suit with Panama hat.

PROPERTIES.

ACT I.

Piano with bench.
Table with lamp, vase, books, etc.
Four chairs and a hassock.
Telephone stand and chair.
Draperies, rugs, etc.
Birthday cake with candles for MARION.
Tennis rackets for EILEEN and SEYMOUR.
Book for BLAIR.
Tea cart with pitcher and glasses for LUCY.
Traveling bag for AUNT LIZZIE.

ACT II.

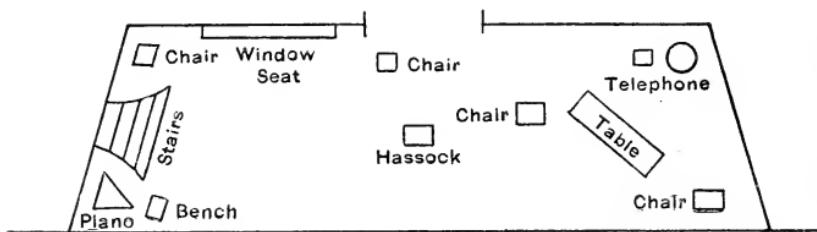
Tapestry for wall.
Tray of punch glasses for LUCY.
Paper and pencil for BLAIR.
Money, paper and key for TEVIS.
Crystal and powder puff for CECILE.

ACT III.

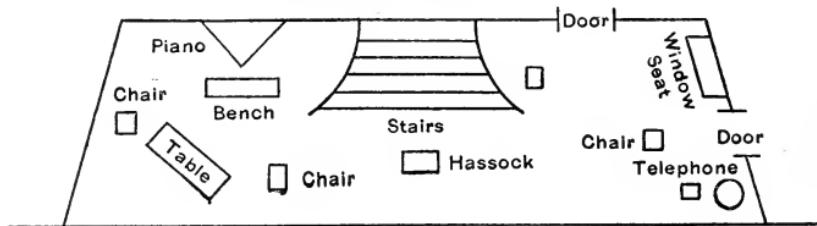
Table, cards, score cards, pencils and newspaper for
LUCY.
Garden shears for MARION.
Flowers for SEYMOUR.
Handbag for JANE.
Gun for BOBBY.
Letter for TEVIS.
Official envelope for JERRY.

SCENE PLOT.

ACT I.



ACTS II AND III.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *D. F.*, door in flat, or scene running across the back of the stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

OUT OF THE STILLNESS

THE FIRST ACT.

SCENE: *The curtain rises upon a large and exquisitely furnished hall, to which wicker and chintz furniture, rich rugs and choice pictures give an air of unmistakable wealth and refinement. Conspicuous among the furnishings are a grand piano and piano bench down right of stage, a long table down left with a large chair on one side and smaller chair on the other. A few books, a vase and a handsome lamp adorn the table, and a rug is thrown over the piano bench. There is a telephone table and chair at the upper left of stage, a large chair a little to the left of the stairway which is at the right of the stage, and a hassock at center. Through a large, open doorway with French windows leading into a yard beyond, the sunshine of a summer afternoon creeps in golden radiance. Right of this door which is at center of flat and reveals landscape drop beyond, is a long open window with window seat and hangings of the chintz. Small table between window and doorway.*

From a dining room left of doorway where a flower-decked table is visible, comes a crowd of merry youngsters, following MARION, who bears aloft a cake lit with ten bright candles. MARION is the finest type of American young womanhood, possessing poise, culture and an indescribable charm. Although she is gay and apparently light-hearted with the children, one is conscious that underneath it all there is a deep depression.

MARION. Make way for the birthday cake! Boys on one side and girls on the other! And every one of

you may blow out a pretty candle. (*Sits right of table with BOBBY on right arm of chair, AIMEE and JUNIE on chair at other side of table, VIRGINIA and BETTY back of table, MARJORY on hassock at center, BILLY and GEORGE on piano bench and MILES on chair left of stairway.*) Who is to be first, Bobby boy?

BOBBY. Aimee, I think. (*Reproachfully.*) Ladies first—always, Aunt Marion.

MARION. Of course. Then Aimee will try this little pink one right on the edge. Ready? (*As AIMEE blows.*) There! Now, Aimee, suppose you make a wish for Bobby—the very nicest wish that you can think of!

AIMEE. The very nicest wish I can think of is about a fairy, Miss Marion.

MARION. What fairy, dear?

AIMEE. The birthday fairy who brings a magic gift.

MARION. And what is the gift?

AIMEE. My story book says it's a happy heart. Do you think that the fairy will come to Bobby?

MARION. I'm sure she will. This very night she'll touch his eyes—and his lips—and his hands.

AIMEE. Then what will happen?

MARION. He'll see only the beautiful things in the world—he'll speak only the kindest words—and he'll always be very busy doing things for other people.

BILLY (*rising*). But there aren't any fairies, Miss Marion.

MARION. No fairies? Why, Billy!

BILLY. I can't see them—or hear them—or feel them. And I'm not going to believe in anything I can't see—or hear—or feel.

MARION. Somebody from Grown-Up Country has been talking to you. And lots of people in Grown-Up Country have forgotten the way to Fairyland.

BILLY (*as he comes forward and blows his candle*). Then I think my wish will be about seeing a fairy, Miss Marion. (*Runs back to chair*.)

VIRGINIA. That's not a real birthday wish and it isn't a wish for Bobby, either.

MARION. Then suppose you take *your* turn, Virginia.

VIRGINIA (*after she blows*). Well, *I* wish that Bobby will be so good that he won't tease me and pull my hair and break my dolly!

MARION. Bobby! Bobby! Do you do all those dreadful things? And to a little girl?

Bobby. Girls make me tired. They can't ever take a joke.

MARION (*as MILES and MARJORY come forward*). Here are Miles and Marjory! (*BOBBY slips over to hassock*.) Suppose you blow very hard—and both together. (*As they blow the candles*.) Now, Miles, what wish are you making for BOBBY? (*MILES whispers*.) It's such a faint little wish that I'll have to listen very closely. (*Leans over as MARJORY whispers also*.) And Marjory wishes the very same thing. Now, what do you think it is, boys and girls?

ALL. Tell us! Tell us!

MARION. Miles and Marjory think it would be just the very nicest thing in the world if Bobby would have another birthday party next week.

AIMEE. But he couldn't have a birthday party without a birthday, could he, Miss Marion? (*Joins GEORGE and BILLY on bench*.)

MARION. Not very well, I'm afraid. (*MILES returns to his chair*. *MARJORY pushes BOBBY from hassock*. *He returns to MARION*.)

GEORGE. And nobody wants a birthday every week.

MARION. Not a bit of it. Birthdays come too often for some of us.

VIRGINIA. Ladies forget all about their birthdays. (*Emphatically shaking her head.*) My—mother—says—so.

BETTY. Why, Miss Marion, you'd be about a hundred million weeks old, wouldn't you?

MARION. Undoubtedly. (*As GEORGE advances.*) Next in line, George?

GEORGE. I have my wish all made up—and it's a bully one, too.

MARION. All right, sir. Out with it! (*He blows.*)

GEORGE. I wish that Bob would get a baseball bat of his own. I'm tired lending mine to him.

BOBBY. Don't want your old bat—

MARION. Bobby! Bobby! Remember that George is your guest.

BOBBY. And anyway, I *did* get one! (*GEORGE runs back to bench as BETTY comes forward.*)

MARION. Betty has a lovely wish—I can see it shining in her eyes.

BETTY (*blowing her candle*). It *is* a lovely wish—and everybody will like it. For I'm wishing just as hard as I can wish that we may go out under the pretty trees with the sunshine and the flowers—and the birds—(*pauses*) Miss Marion?

MARION. Yes, dear?

BETTY. The cake is to eat—isn't it?

MARION (*laughing*). Of course it is. And something tells me that there is lemonade out under those pretty trees. (*All start toward door.*) Wait a moment until Junie has had his chance.

JUNIE (*after blowing his candle*). Bobby and I both

want to be soldiers—and we're going to be. And what's more we're going to—fight!

BOBBY. My father was a soldier—and he fought very bravely. Didn't he, Aunt Marion?

MARION. Yes, dear. And he died for his country just as bravely.

BOBBY (*after a pause*). May I make a wish, too? (*Rises.*)

MARION. Of course you may.

BOBBY. Then I wish that I may grow up to be—just—like—him!

MARION (*hiding her face on his shoulder*). Oh, Bobby, Bobby!

And JANE enters, gay, smiling and possessing the intangible something which marks a thoughtfulness of others.

JANE. Don't tell me that I'm too late for the birthday cake. (*BETTY and VIRGINIA run to one side, MARJORY to the other.*)

MARION. The cake is intact, Jane; but, like the foolish Virgin, you lose out on the lights.

JANE. Your Biblical reference is a bit hazy, my dear, but, in the language of the outer world, I get you! (*Turns.*) Can't I even make a wish, Bobby?

BOBBY. Not without a candle, Miss Jane.

JANE. But a wish can be a perfectly good wish without a candle, can't it?

BOBBY. Try it and see.

JANE. Of course I'll try it. (*Pauses.*) Well—let me think a moment. (*Again she pauses.*) Has anybody made a wish about the Birthday Town?

MARJORY. The *Birthday Town*?

JANE. Haven't you ever heard about the Birthday Town, Marjory?

MARJORIE. Why—no.

JANE. Haven't you, George?

GEORGE. Never heard of it.

JANE. Or you, Betty?

BETTY. Never in all my life.

JANE. Dear me—what can your mothers and fathers be thinking of!

MILES (*jumping up and down*). Tell us, Miss Jane—please tell us!

JANE. Sure you all want to hear about it? (*They assent.*) Well, the Birthday Town can't be described in any plain, everyday words. (*Goes to piano.*) It has a lovely jingle—all it's own. (*MARION stands back of piano and lifts JUNIE to piano; BOBBY stands by her; GEORGE stands at side of piano, next to audience; VIRGINIA, MARJORIE and AIMEE sit on floor at JANE's left; BETTY stands at her right and MILES and BILLY back of her. JANE recites to a musical accompaniment.*) Have you ever heard of the Birthday Town—that is near the River of Time?

In the magical, mystical Land of Youth, next door to the Grown-Up Clime?

There are millions of rainbow-colored toys—

There are whiling, beguiling, childish joys—

There's a rollicking, frolicking time—and it's all for the birthday girls and boys.

There are fairy flowers,

There are elfin bowers,

There are golden hours

In the Birthday Town.

There are Merry-Go-Rounds that never stop—
there's a wonderful sugar-plum tree;

There's a musical chime of happy hearts—there's a glimmering, shimmering sea

With thistledown roseleaf ships that gleam
Like fairy smiles in a quiet dream,
While a whizzing, dizzying Man-in-the-Moon rides
down on a slanting beam.

There's a golden haze,
There's a mystic maze,
There are cloudless days
In the Birthday Town.

(*As she finishes the second verse she rises from the piano and says, "Join hands, boys and girls, and we'll go out under the trees." Then she takes BOBBY's hand and leads a winding march and the children follow, hand-in-hand in a long line. As they march she continues:*)

And how do we reach the Birthday Town—why, we
follow the little Years

As they beckon us on and on and on away from the
Grown-Up fears—

Through a glistening mist of silvery gray,
Their clarion call rings sweet and gay,
Like dancing, glancing will-o'-the-wisps they lead
us along the way.

Oh there's endless youth,
And there's childhood truth,
And there's love, forsooth,
In the Birthday Town.

And, at the last, she leads them all through the doorway and into the yard beyond. MARION stands at the doorway looking after them as MRS. DEERING enters from the dining room. She is faultlessly attired, properly conventional and naturally a little hard.

MRS. D. BOBBY's party seems to be a success if one may judge from the attendant noise. (*Sits right of table.*)

LUCY *enters from dining room and carries cake outdoors.*

MARION (*turning*). I hope so. Birthdays should be the very brightest spots upon the background of one's vanishing youth. (*Sits on arm of chair right of door.*)

MRS. D. And, fortunately, a child forgets.

MARION. Bobby has not forgotten, mother.

MRS. D. Then it is because you force him to remember. Death, to a child, is merely an incident, painful at the time, but soon merging into oblivion.

MARION. Surely his father's heroic death is more than an incident.

MRS. D. Yet thousands died in the same way. The boy has his life to live—and we have ours.

MARION. I cannot understand you, mother. There is not a moment in the day when I do not think of Bob—his care, his unselfishness, his splendidness. There is not a moment when I fail to realize that he is—gone.

MRS. D. I am his mother, Marion. Surely a mother, as well as a sister, has some claim to grief.

MARION. You suffered in your own way—but not in mine. Bob was not to you what he was to me.

MRS. D. Robert was a dutiful son—he fulfilled all my expectations. I gave him willingly to the country—I am proud of the way he died. Naturally, I feel his loss, but I refuse to allow it to shadow my existence. What has happened is beyond my control; accordingly, as I said before, I have my life to live and it is my privilege to live it in the way that will bring most happiness.

MARION. You never understood him.

MRS. D. Perhaps not. You must remember that he gave his affection—unreservedly—to you.

MARION. But you never invited his confidence—and—apparently—did not desire a closer tie.

MRS. D. Certainly not. I am not demonstrative, Marion, nor am I sentimental. I have allowed you children everything in the way of money, travel, education and social advantages. What other obligation rests upon me?

MARION. Bob craved more than that.

MRS. D. Which you doubtless gave him.

MARION. Oh, I did—I did! There was nothing which we did not share—

MRS. D. To the exclusion of his wife.

MARION (*scornfully, as she rises*). *Natalie!* What sympathy, understanding, consideration and love did she ever give him! His money and his good looks charmed her—and, as for him—well, it was the mistake of his life. (*Crosses and sits on the piano bench.*)

MRS. D. You're speaking from the standpoint of a jealous sister.

MARION. Oh, no, I'm not. I should have been happy in his happiness.

MRS. D. Natalie was the belle of her own particular set, and Robert was counted very fortunate to win her.

MARION. You urged it, mother—you know you did.

MRS. D. Naturally. She had her own fortune; she possessed a social grace—

MARION. And being a good wife and mother has never entered into her scheme of existence.

MRS. D. You are unfair to Natalie.

MARION. Perhaps I am. You see, I am judging her by sins of omission. For Bob was everything to me—

MRS. D. And to her.

MARION. Do you think so? Then how do you explain her apparent forgetfulness at the present time?

MRS. D. She was very conventional after his death. She wore her mourning for the proper length of time.

MARION. It was very becoming.

MRS. D. And rigorously absented herself from any social function.

MARION. For which isolation she is now compensating herself by a round of gayety.

MRS. D. You cannot expect Natalie to forego all pleasures. She is young—fun-loving—and attractive—

MARION. To the men. You've said it all.

MRS. D. Don't repeat such a remark to one who might judge more harshly than I. The natural inference to a stranger would be—that you are envious.

MARION. I think not. Even a stranger would realize that Natalie and I have different standards. (*Abruptly.*) Who is this latest dangler?

MRS. D. Alfred Tevis is his name. He is exceedingly charming, evidently fascinated with Natalie—and I can see no reason why we should not have him as a guest.

MARION. I don't like him—and Natalie is flirting outrageously.

MRS. D. Again let me remind you that you are unfair to Natalie.

MARION. Then she is unfair to Bob's memory.

MRS. D. Natalie is a good daughter-in-law, Marion.

MARION (*rising*). And I wish to be a good daughter, mother. (*Crosses to MRS. DEERING.*)

MRS. D. Then don't be morbid.

MARION. I'm not morbid—and I never intrude my grief. (*Stands in front of doorway with back to audience.*)

MRS. D. Then—forget. Enjoy the gay times with other young people—enter into every festivity—even

fall in love—and marry. Life will seem very different to you and you will find that there is a cure for every sorrow.

MARION. There is no cure for mine. Oh, it seems cruel—cruel—that only Bobby and I should remember—or care! (*Crosses to right of stage.*)

Enter JANE from doorway.

JANE. Such a happy lot of kiddies I never saw! (*Comes to Mrs. D.*) And—oh, such a wonderful old home, Mrs. Deering! How lovely of you to let me enjoy it with you. (*Stands back of Mrs. DEERING's chair.*)

MARION (*turning*). Your artistic soul loves beauty, doesn't it, Jane? And your hard-working self needs a rest. I'm glad you can be here with us, even for the few short weeks you promised.

MRS. D. (*complacently*). It is a beautiful place—and will make a satisfactory summer home, I think. I find that the right sort of people is all about us—and that is always such a relief.

JANE. Who are your neighbors?

MRS. D. The Stuyvesants are on one side. Of course you know the Stuyvesants. (*JANE nods.*) Then the house beyond them has been sold to some wealthy stranger who has not yet taken possession.

JANE. And your other next door neighbor?

MRS. D. Is a Mr. Blair. He has rented the house for the summer and is engaged in some scientific work I understand—so he won't bother us. I dislike to have a *rented* estate so near, but there is always the chance of its being sold to a permanent occupant.

JANE. How did you happen to purchase the place? (*Crosses and sits on the piano bench.*)

MRS. D. My lawyer heard of it and I really obtained

it at a bargain as the owner was exceedingly eager to sell.

MARION. Originally, it had a history, I'm told. It even claims a tragedy—and a subsequent ghost. (*Sits left of stairway.*)

MRS. D. All utter nonsense.

MARION. Of course—but I'm just repeating the gossip. But one thing we *do* know.

JANE. And what's that?

MARION. That the Hunters, who sold it to us, took possession after the notorious Von Holz had precipitately, and at the instigation of the government, departed for his native land on the Rhine.

JANE. I don't remember about him.

MARION. He was, in reality, one of Germany's big men—delegated to special work in America. He lived here as a recluse accumulating such information as he could; and just as the government was about to lay its finger upon him, somebody warned him and he escaped.

JANE. Leaving, I suppose, a valuable document lying carelessly about.

MARION. If so, nobody has yet discovered it.

JANE. Then this is our chance to make the discovery. Wouldn't it be thrilling to hold Germany in the hollow of one's hand?

MRS. D. (*rising*). Too thrilling even to think about. Suppose you two discuss it while I pay my respects to the birthday party. (*Goes out doorway.*)

MARION (*rising*). Jane, am I morbid? (*Sits by JANE.*)

JANE. Not morbid—but frightfully unhappy. Have you ever stopped to think that—whatever trouble has come to a person—she has only to stretch forth her hand to grasp some happiness in the world about her?

MARION. That's a theory—not a fact.

JANE. But it *is* a fact.

MARION. Not for me.

JANE. Then you have taken an unnatural attitude, Marion, and Bob would be the last to wish it so.

MARION. Bob seems so far away—he, who was the nearest—and dearest.

JANE. But he should still be nearest—and dearest.

MARION. I can't understand it, Jane. (*Pauses.*) Just before he sailed for France he said—with a little catch in his voice—for we were thinking of the same thing—“Sis—dear old Sis—do you think that a little thing like death can separate us?” But it has—it has.

JANE. Death is no barrier.

MARION. You see things differently, Jane.

JANE. Why shouldn't I? If you had been overseas as I have been; if you, too, had watched scores of brave young fellows meet the great adventure, you would feel—with me—that they have simply slipped across the border.

MARION (*rising*). Bob is gone—gone—that is all I can realize—all I can comprehend. (*Crosses right of table.*)

JANE. Would it not help to see John Carey—to hear him tell of Bob?

MARION. Never—never.

JANE. John Carey was Bob's best friend—his comrade—he was with him just before the end. It seems to me that your greatest comfort would come from him.

MARION. John Carey is only a name to me—I never saw him—Bob met him overseas. Why should the sight of him remind me that he is spared—with life and hope and love before him—and that Bob is—dead.

JANE. That's a wrong and an unworthy view to take of it, Marion.

MARION. But I can't help it.

JANE. Has he written—lately?

MARION. Yes.

JANE. He still wishes to see you?

MARION. Yes. (*Pauses.*) And, once again, I have refused.

JANE. I'm sorry.

MARION. Perhaps, I'm wrong—and I know I am ungenerous.

JANE (*rising*). Because you haven't yet learned the great lesson of the war. (*Joins MARION at center.*)

MARION. And that—

JANE. You must find out for yourself. (*Places an arm around MARION.*) In the meantime, watch the kids at play; the sunshine will do you good.

MARION (*smiling*). And a few sunbeams may come my way. (*As JANE kisses her.*) You're hoping that—aren't you, Jane?

JANE. Indeed I am. (*MARION passes out the doorway. Hardly has she disappeared when JANE quickly makes her way to the telephone and seats herself.*) Oakland 74 * * * I have left the book on your side of the hedge * * * it will serve as a sufficient excuse for your appearance * * * any time this afternoon. (*Hangs up the receiver and seems absorbed in thought.*)

SEYMORE appears at doorway, twirling a tennis racket, very pleasant to behold in his summer flannels, and impressing one with his grace of bearing, his charm of manner and his gift of an artistic temperament. For a moment he stands unnoticed by JANE and gazes quizzically at her.

SEYMORE. If I had my palette, Jane, I'd paint you

as Meditation—a stern and determined Meditation. You look as if you had just settled a human fate.

JANE. Perhaps I have—who knows? And why haven't you your palette, Byrne Seymour? (*Crosses and sits on arm of chair right of table.*)

SEYMOUR. Because, in my present frame of mind, a tennis racket is much easier to hold. (*Sits on hassock.*)

JANE. Isn't there ever to be another frame of mind?

SEYMOUR. Meaning—

JANE. Your art. I've known you too long and too well, Byrne, not to protest against any weakening of your ambition.

SEYMOUR. Ambition doesn't necessarily mean talent—nor does it always bring success.

JANE. But it signifies a loyalty to one's ideals—and a sincere effort to realize them.

SEYMOUR. I am a slacker, Jane—I'll be honest with you. (*Pauses.*) And I'll never go back to art.

JANE. And why? (*Sits in chair.*)

SEYMOUR. I can't—that's all. After the hospital—Flanders—and the hell of it all—art seems a trivial—an impossible thing. And—my hand has lost its cunning.

JANE. You shall not say it.

SEYMOUR. It's no use for you to remonstrate, Jane—for not even you can pull me out of this black hole of depression which follows the memory of trench, wounds and battlefield. Oh, I don't show it, I know—but it's there.

JANE (*leaning forward*). Will you listen to me?

SEYMOUR. Haven't I listened to you since the Art League days when we hoped and slaved and starved together?

JANE. But they were happy days just the same.

SEYMOUR. Weren't they, though? Do you remember the funny little lunches with never enough to go round?

JANE (*eagerly*). And the day you sold your first picture!

SEYMOUR. And the concerts in the topmost seats of the topmost balcony? You've come on since then, Jane, and your little old scrawl means something to the literary light who wants his books to bear the best illustrations.

JANE. And your pictures have a technique and a vision which few young painters achieve.

SEYMOUR. Nonsense!

JANE. Oh, but it isn't nonsense. Do you know who said that very thing? Merton. And you must admit that Merton is the greatest of our art critics.

SEYMOUR. Did he really say it?

JANE. He really did. Now—with the knowledge of such a tribute—can you say that your hand has lost its cunning?

SEYMOUR. But that was my work before the war.

JANE. And the war means readjustment—that's all.

SEYMOUR. I'm not so sure of that.

JANE. But I *am*. Your beauty-loving soul has been paralyzed by the ugliness of war; your incentive has seemingly been lost; but, now that the horror is gone, you must force yourself back to the old perspective.

SEYMOUR. Even with talent and a possible future there are years and years of struggle and poverty to an artist who does not possess some magic influence to push him into the limelight.

JANE. Exactly. I'm taking care of all that for you.

SEYMOUR. And how—oh Wise One?

JANE. You may not like what I'm saying to you.

SEYMORE (*laughing*). It won't be the first time.

JANE. But, Byrne, I do want things made easy for you—I want to see you achieve fame and happiness unhampered by the problems of everyday existence. For you're on the road to something great if you'll only take the right turn.

SEYMORE. And the right turn?

JANE. Is to marry.

SEYMORE. *Marry?* (*Rises*.) Great heavens, girl, even if I had the money I couldn't do *that*. Remember that "he travels the fastest who travels alone."

JANE. Not always. For you must marry some one who can give you this very influence you need and desire—the influence which will push you into the lime-light. (*Pauses*.) I've even chosen the girl.

SEYMORE. Who?

JANE. Marion.

SEYMORE. *Marion?*

JANE. Why not? She is the very one to inspire you. She is appreciative of genius; she knows those who can be of inestimable service to you. In short, she could provide the very atmosphere you need.

SEYMORE. But I'm not in love with her.

JANE. Not now, perhaps. But it will be very easy to love Marion—and to love her sincerely.

SEYMORE. And I'm the last man on earth she would care to marry.

JANE. I'm not so sure of that. Marion is very lonely since Bob's death; she needs just such love and protection as you could give her.

SEYMORE. Hang it all, Jane! You're going too far. I'm not a cad.

JANE. Of course you're not. (*Rises*.)

SEYMOUR. And even the suggestion is unfair to Marion. (*Crosses to lower right of stage.*)

JANE. Naturally, unless you can grow to love her.

MARION *enters from doorway.*

JANE. Dear me! Surely the party isn't over. (*Stands in front of table.*)

MARION. Not a bit of it. I'm sent to tell you that a portion of the birthday cake is waiting you if you hurry. (*Crossing to SEYMOUR.*) Why so serious, Raphael?

SEYMOUR. Jane has been lecturing me about my future.

MARION. Futures are uncertain quantities. Best not bother about them.

JANE. Except when one is about to paint a picture.

MARION. That does make a difference. What's the subject, Byrne?

SEYMOUR. Suggest one.

MARION. War, of course. (*Bitterly.*) The face of a fearless, splendid youth—and against the background the shadow of a Prussian helmet! (*Turns and walks back stage.*)

JANE. Oh, no—no! Rather make War a tall, majestic figure, behind whose somber robes one glimpses blue sky, golden sunshine and quiet happiness.

Enter BLAIR from doorway. He is striking in appearance—of a dignified reserve—which makes his lighter moods all the more attractive.

BLAIR. Pardon my intrusion—but I am looking for Miss Deering.

MARION (*coming forward*). I am Miss Deering.

BLAIR (*coming forward*). Then I have the satisfaction of returning what I am sure is a most cherished

possession. (*Hands her a book which he is carrying.*) By some strange fancy it found its way to the other side of the hedge which divides your grounds from mine. I am Sheridan Blair, Miss Deering.

MARION (*offering her hand*). Then the lost book has been instrumental in introducing neighbors, hasn't it? Though how it was spirited to your domain I cannot imagine.

BLAIR. Perhaps one of the human fairies on your lawn is responsible.

MARION. It's quite possible. (*Turns.*) Miss Carroll and Mr. Seymour—Mr. Blair. (*They all acknowledge introductions and Blair gives Jane an understanding look.*) And as it is about tea time, you must begin to be neighborly by becoming acquainted with us all.

BLAIR. It's a temptation—but my car is waiting and I must not linger. Another afternoon, if I may.

MARION. We shall be glad to see you at any time.

BLAIR. Then may I share a sunset with you? (*Crosses to doorway and looks off stage.*) The view from this spot must be quite wonderful.

SEYMORE. So wonderful that it beggars description.

MARION. Are you motoring for any length of time, Mr. Blair?

BLAIR. Only for an hour or so.

MARION. In that case you will return when the sky is most gorgeous—so do not hesitate to take possession of the grounds and make the most of the color scheme.

BLAIR. You are very kind and I shall take advantage of the suggestion. (*Bows.*) Goodbye.

MARION. Goodbye. And many thanks. (*Exit Blair at left of doorway.*)

SEYMORE. I like him, Marion.

MARION. So do I.

JANE. And do you suppose I've stayed so long that my piece of birthday cake is forfeit?

MARION. I can't promise—but I advise immediate investigation.

As JANE goes out right of doorway, she collides with EILEEN, who rushes frantically in. EILEEN is a noisy little whirlwind, impetuous, lively and impish.

EILEEN (*shaking MARION*). Who—is—the—man?

MARION. Our next door neighbor. He returned a book which had mysteriously been transported to his yard. (*Lays book on table.*) Do you approve of him?

EILEEN. *Approve?* He's heavenly. And it will be such a relief to have a real man about.

SEYMORE. Great heavens, Eileen—spare a fellow. As I've been a guest for some days and very much around, that remark makes me squirm.

EILEEN. But you're a genius, Byrne, and a genius is never a real man. (*Stands left of stairway.*)

And next, MRS. DEERING enters—hurriedly and evidently excited.

MRS. D. (*going to MARION*). Who—is—the—man?

MARION (*laughingly*). Our next door neighbor.

MRS. D. What was he doing here?

MARION. Kindly returning a book of mine which he found on his side of the hedge.

MRS. D. He's very distinguished in appearance.

EILEEN. Which means that he wears good looking clothes.

MRS. D. Don't be flippant, Eileen. (*As she touches bell button right of doorway.*) It seems there's one worry after another today

EILEEN. What's the latest?

MRS. D. The chauffeur has left.

MARION. No particular trouble, I hope?

MRS. D. Words with the gardener—and I haven't the slightest doubt that this minx of a Lucy fanned the flame.

EILEEN. Never mind. I know of another chauffeur. One of the girls has a perfect treasure whom she wishes to hand over for the summer. (*Crosses to table.*) Shall I call her up?

MRS. D. I've already telephoned the city—but an inquiry on your part will not be amiss. (*As LUCY enters from dining room.*) You may serve iced tea, Lucy—and we'll have it here.

LUCY. Yes, Mrs. Deering. (*Goes to dining room.* LUCY, *by the way, is small and coquettish and wears a bewitching apron and cap with her severely plain black gown.*)

MRS. D. (*seating herself in chair right of doorway.*) What makes it particularly annoying is the fact that Aunt Lizzie is arriving this afternoon. I've been forced to send a hired car for her—and such a proceeding will not meet with her approval.

EILEEN. Aunt Lizzie! I'd forgotten all about her. Hadn't you, Marion? (*Sits right of table.*)

MARION. I'm afraid I had. (*Glances at watch.*) She should be here now.

MRS. D. Something has happened, I'm afraid.

MARION. Don't worry. The train is late—as usual. That's all. If you people will excuse me I'll rest a bit—and finish a letter that must go tonight.

EILEEN. It isn't fair to leave Aunt Lizzie to us.

MARION. Then save her for me. (*Goes up staircase.*)

SEYMORE (*sitting on piano bench*). Who is Aunt Lizzie?

EILEEN. The family skeleton, Byrne. Not really a skeleton—but you understand.

MRS. D. *Eileen!*

EILEEN. And the reason we don't shut her up in a closet is because of her bank account. Her bones may not rattle—but her dollars do.

MRS. D. (*with dignity*). Miss Deering is the sister of my husband, Byrne. She is a bit sharp-tongued and a trifle eccentric—but in spite of it all a very estimable woman.

EILEEN. Being an artist, Byrne, you can make a mental picture. Sharp-tongued, eccentric, estimable—but wait until you meet her!

Enter NATALIE and TEVIS—NATALIE, dainty, coquettish and very aware of her own charms; TEVIS polished, courteous and of winning personality. They stand in the doorway. SEYMORE rises.

NATALIE. Dear me! I hope we're not late for tea. (*Crosses to chair left of stairway and seats herself.* SEYMORE sits.)

MRS. D. On the contrary, you're just on time. I had begun to fear that the birthday party had proved too attractive.

TEVIS (*crossing and standing by EILEEN*). Lemonade and cake are a bit too ambrosial for husky mortals like me.

NATALIE. The party was a wee bit depressing, after all. For it is rather overwhelming to realize that I am the mother of that big ten-year-old boy.

TEVIS. I haven't reached the point of realizing it. You must have drunk deeply of the fountain of youth.

EILEEN. The real fountain of youth belongs to a

prehistoric age, Mr. Tevis. Nowadays, its substitute comes in small, beauty-parlor boxes with a war tax!

NATALIE (*rising*). Eileen, do you mind changing places with me. The strong light gives me a headache.

EILEEN (*rising*). Of course I'll change. I like to sit in a strong light because it proves that, as yet, I have acquired no wrinkles. (*They change places.*)

SEYMOUR. Don't boast, young lady. Your time will come.

EILEEN. I hope so. I'd hate to reach the legitimate wrinkle age and not have what's coming to me.

TEVIS. Rather an original view of the matter—isn't it, Seymour? (*Brings telephone chair and places it at NATALIE's right.*)

SEYMOUR. No more original than the perpetrator of the remark.

MRS. D. Originality seems hardly the term to apply to the vagaries of a would-be reformer.

TEVIS. And who is the would-be reformer? Surely not Miss Eileen.

NATALIE. The very one. Her first attempt had to do with the Board of the Orphan Asylum. (*Pauses.*) Fortunately, she escaped with her life.

EILEEN. And the entire approbation of the orphans. Don't forget that, Natalie, if you insist upon acting as publicity committee.

NATALIE. Her next achievement was a campaign in the interest of good roads—she even stumped the neighborhood. All she gained was an unappreciative audience, a broken car, a fractured disposition—

EILEEN. And experience. Don't forget the experience. I haven't.

TEVIS. By Jove, Miss Eileen, you would have hastened the victory of the English suffragettes.

SEYMOUR. Why worry about anything so far away when there is a perfectly good Prison Reform Bill which needs agitators.

EILEEN (*excitedly*). Really, Byrne? I have some corking ideas upon Prison Reform.

SEYMOUR. Then why not hand them on to the proper parties?

EILEEN. I'm afraid they wouldn't listen.

TEVIS. Too far advanced for them?

EILEEN. Something like that. You see, I believe that the only way to manage a criminal is to treat him as if nothing had happened; to make him feel that he is trusted; to instill the right principles; to recognize him as a social equal.

TEVIS. Mrs. Deering, I shall contend that your daughter is original.

MRS. D. After that speech—who wouldn't?

SEYMOUR. My dear girl—in the immortal words of the poet—it *can't be did!*

EILEEN. Oh, but it can. (*Excitedly.*) Would that fate would send me a criminal of my own to reform! (*Rises.*)

MRS. D. (*in an annoyed tone*). Really, Eileen, this is carrying matters a bit too far.

NATALIE (*plaintively*). It's an age of progression—isn't it? And I am so dreadfully old-fashioned! (*Sighs.*) There seems to be no place for the quiet little woman who loves her home, her household duties—

EILEEN (*slily*). And her fellow man? (*Sits on the arm of her chair.*)

TEVIS. Isn't there? (*Leans forward and whispers.*) There is for me.

Enter LUCY with tea cart bearing tall pitcher of iced tea; also glasses and spoons.

MRS. D. Natalie, will you serve? (LUCY wheels cart to NATALIE, and, after serving everyone, goes out at dining room.)

TEVIS. Your country home is a marvel of beauty, Mrs. Deering. Rarely—even in England—have I seen anything more stately and more picturesque.

MRS. D. What gratifying praise, Mr. Tevis—especially so, since I value your opinion. You have lived abroad?

TEVIS. Off and on. I am rather a vagabond, I fear.

EILEEN. In the war, of course.

TEVIS (*lightly*). Who *wasn't* in the war!

SEYMORE. Now that we are once more settling down to normal existence, perhaps America will prove attractive enough to claim you as a permanent citizen.

TEVIS (*with a glance at NATALIE who becomes confused*). I fancy it will.

EILEEN. Watch out, Natalie! Those glasses are rattling like castanets.

SEYMORE. Have you heard of the family ghost, Tevis?

TEVIS. Don't tell me that this perfect place is saddled with a ghost.

NATALIE. But it is. The ghost of a long-ago maiden who killed her lover. And it's said to appear only before disaster descends upon the house. Gruesome, isn't it?

EILEEN. Being haunted by a thousand ghosts isn't equal to the contamination of one German.

TEVIS (*quickly*). A German? Now we are getting down to modern times.

MRS. D. This German was a former resident of the place. The government disturbed his meditation—and he left unceremoniously.

TEVIS. Captured, of course.

MRS. D. Unfortunately not—though the house was surrounded. His escape has been something of a mystery.

EILEEN. Sounds like an underground passage to me. Wouldn't it be fun to find his bones along the way?

NATALIE (*placing her glass upon cart*). Suppose we change the subject—it's getting on my nerves. (*Rises.*) I'll be chief exorciser and relegate the traitors and the ghosts to their proper habitation. (*Crosses to piano bench as SEYMORE rises, crosses to MRS. DEERING and places her glass and his upon cart.*)

TEVIS (*after placing his glass upon cart*). What can a Dresden shepherdess have to do with traitors and ghosts? (*Follows NATALIE.*)

EILEEN (*as she crosses to tea cart with her glass*). You're always calling Natalie names, Mr. Tevis.

TEVIS (*standing by NATALIE who seats herself upon bench*). I don't understand.

EILEEN. Night before last she was a Turner sunset —whatever that may be; last night she reminded you of a Rossetti sonnet—and now you've turned her into a Dresden shepherdess.

NATALIE. But I like his pretty phrases. (*To Tevis.*) Can't you manufacture more of them?

EILEEN (*as she and SEYMORE stand left of table*). Wait until Aunt Lizzie arrives and he can add Kansas Cyclone to the list.

And just then a shadow darkens the doorway. It resolves itself into an indignant individual whose long coat is plentifully sprinkled with dust, whose hat is at a rakish angle, whose hand frantically clutches a Boston bag of huge dimensions, and whose general appearance resembles that of an avenging fury. With a

scornful glance at the astounded company she delivers herself of one monosyllable—“WELL!”

NATALIE (*running to her*). Aunt Lizzie! Aunt Lizzie!

MRS. D. (*hurrying to her side*). What has happened?

AUNT LIZZIE (*pushing Mrs. Deering with her left hand.*) Don’t paw me, Alice. (*Pushing NATALIE aside with her right hand.*) I’m in no kissing mood, Natalie. Don’t ask this late in the day what has happened—for a tramp of a mile through the dust of your charming country roads is no incentive to amiability. (*EILEEN crosses back of chair right of table as AUNT LIZZIE with MRS. DEERING and NATALIE slowly advance.*)

MRS. D. *Lizzie!* You don’t mean to say that you *walked*?

AUNT L. Was there anything ambiguous in my language? And does my appearance suggest an easy transit?

SEYMORE (*pushing forward chair right of table*). Won’t you be seated?

AUNT L. (*as she seats herself*). Take my bag, Eileen—and don’t joggle it. My medicine is inside. (*EILEEN takes bag and AUNT LIZZIE leans back in the chair. Suddenly she sits upright.*) Young man, this chair squeaks!

TEVIS (*hastily drawing out chair left of stairway*). Then try this one.

MRS. D. (*as AUNT LIZZIE settles herself in the other chair*). But, Lizzie—I don’t understand. Didn’t the car arrive in time to meet the train? (*Stands at AUNT LIZZIE’s left.*)

AUNT L. A *hired* car arrived—and a strange chauf-

feur. Since when is it your custom to greet guests in this fashion?

MRS. D. I'm sorry—so very sorry that it had to happen in this way. But our own chauffeur gave notice this morning—and left.

AUNT L. The habit seems indigenous to the soil. For this other chauffeur brought me two-thirds of the way—and left.

MRS. D. *Left?*

AUNT L. His speed was somewhat accelerated by the appearance of a masked horseman who pointed a pistol at our heads.

SEYMORE. A highwayman?

AUNT L. No—a plain hold-up.

NATALIE (*who is at her right*). Why, Aunt Lizzie—here in broad daylight? It's impossible!

AUNT L. Am I in the habit of making equivocal statements, Natalie?

NATALIE. Oh, I don't mean *that*, Aunt Lizzie!

AUNT L. Or is it likely that I was the subject of an hallucination?

NATALIE. Oh, you don't understand. I am trying to tell you that someone was doubtless playing a joke.

AUNT L. To the tune of my pocket-book and watch? Nonsense.

EILEEN. Was there much in your pocket-book?

AUNT L. Not enough to allow him to live in riotous extravagance. (*Pauses.*) And my watch was plated.

NATALIE. But the shock to your nerves—

AUNT L. (*severely*). I have no nerves. Such a luxury belongs exclusively to modern times.

TEVIS (*who stands at NATALIE's right*). The effron-

tery of this fellow is amazing. To frequent a much-traveled highway—to terrorize women in this way—

AUNT L. *Terrorize?* Young man, don't think for a moment that he even frightened me. Your sex—as a generality and as individuals—has long since ceased to impress me in any way.

SEYMOUR. Can you remember anything about his appearance, Miss Deering? In case we attempt to trace him, a description would be useful.

AUNT L. I always remember details. He wore some sort of a riding suit—the kind that requires the legs to be incased in strait jackets—

EILEEN (*mischievously*). We call them riding boots, Aunt Lizzie.

AUNT L. (*with a scornful glance at Eileen*). His soft hat was thrust in his pocket, his hair was dark, he wore gauntlet gloves, and over his face was tied a white handkerchief with a blue border.

SEYMOUR. How clever of you to notice these things. Now it will be much easier to trace him.

AUNT L. There may be another mark of identification also.

SEYMOUR. What?

AUNT L. A limp. As he was mounting his horse I threw the chauffeur's monkey wrench at his head. It hit his foot.

MRS. D. (*who has in the meantime touched the bell button*). Give me Aunt Lizzie's bag, Eileen, and I'll show her to her room. (EILEEN obeys. LUCY enters from dining room.) Lucy, take out the tea things and bring a cup of coffee and some sandwiches to Miss Deering.

LUCY. Yes, Mrs. Deering.

AUNT L. (*as she and Mrs. DEERING mount the*

stairs). And have it strong, girl. I'd rather drink dish water than weak coffee.

(*LUCY removes tea cart and goes out at dining room door.*)

SEYMORE (*moving towards doorway*). Come out for a game of tennis, Eileen.

EILEEN (*sinking into chair right of table*). Not much. I'm too exhilarated. Aunt Lizzie's effect on me is like that of champagne on an empty tummy.

SEYMORE. What do you know about champagne, infant?

EILEEN. Nothing. But I've heard tell. (SEYMORE *goes out doorway*.)

NATALIE (*as she and TEVIS stroll slowly off stage at doorway*). Oh, dear! In addition to our ghost and our German traitor, we now have a highwayman to worry about.

EILEEN (*mockingly*). And what can a Dresden shepherdess have to do with a highwayman! (*Emphatically*.) I wish that *I* had a chance at the highwayman. I'd show him that the modern girl can't be sent into hysterics by the mere point of a pistol.

She moves restlessly about the room, restoring the chairs to their accustomed position. Finally she settles herself in the chair right of table and opens a book. For a few moments all is quiet—then the inexplicable sixth sense which informs one that her privacy has been invaded, causes her to look up. There in the open doorway stands the picturesque figure of a dashing youth, clad in a riding suit. In one hand he carries a riding crop; in the other, a soft crush hat. From his pocket protrudes a white handkerchief with a blue border; and, as he starts across the room, he walks with a slight limp.

For a moment EILEEN gazes at him in amazement, then rises and throws up her hands as if in surrender. The newcomer (who will soon answer to the name of JERRY), returns the scrutiny with equal amazement.

JERRY. I beg your pardon for this abrupt entrance. (*As she backs away from him.*) Great heavens! I don't intend to hurt you.

EILEEN. Stand right there!

JERRY. I'll do better than that—I'll go. (*Turns.*)

EILEEN. Not without an explanation.

JERRY. That's easily given. The entrance to your grounds is so similar to that of my destination that I turned in, unthinkingly. I saw your open door—and thought I'd apologize. That's all.

EILEEN (*coming nearer and whispering*). Are they after you?

JERRY. I don't understand.

EILEEN. And would you like to hide?

JERRY. Hide? Why should I hide?

EILEEN (*pointing*). That suit! That handkerchief! Those boots! That hat! Those gauntlets!

JERRY (*looking at himself*). Is it as bad as all that?

EILEEN (*severely*). Don't try to evade the question. *For I know.*

JERRY. Then, I fear, you have the advantage of me.

EILEEN. Unfortunately for you, it was my aunt at whose head you pointed your pistol, not two hours ago.

JERRY. Did I have the nerve to do a thing like that?

EILEEN. And whose watch and pocket-book you took.

JERRY (*smiling*). Without so much as asking her pardon?

EILEEN. Being a highwayman is no joking matter.

JERRY. Do you mind telling me why you think I'm the highwayman?

EILEEN (*dramatically pointing*). That suit! That handkerchief! Those boots! That hat! Those gauntlets!

JERRY (*standing behind chair left of stairway*). Oh, I begin to see through the mystery. Evidently the gentleman of the road has tastes similar to my own. We may even patronize the same tailor.

EILEEN (*seizing him by the arm and dragging him to center*). Hide—please hide.

JERRY. I'll be hanged if I do!

EILEEN. You'll be hanged if you don't.

JERRY. The trying to escape is hardly worth while.

EILEEN. They'd never think of looking for you *here*.

JERRY. Why are you so interested in my welfare?

EILEEN (*haughtily*). I should show the same interest in any hunted creature.

JERRY. Even a desperate criminal?

EILEEN. Oh *why* did you choose a life of crime?

JERRY. The excitement—the uncertainty—the risk of it all. Imagine what it is to plan—to scheme—to watch—to wait—to feel the tingling pulse of adventure—to listen to the siren voice of the road—to know that on your own wit, your own nerve, your own quickness depends your safety! (*Pauses.*) Why, there's nothing in the world can equal it!

EILEEN. But—robbery!

JERRY. Why not—in the open? Most of your friends, shut up in a conventional office, are probably doing the same thing—on the quiet.

EILEEN. Haven't you ever had any desire to reform?

JERRY. Not unless such a course would prove advantageous to me. Would it?

EILEEN. It would at least be respectable.

JERRY. Respectability is often—deadly.

EILEEN. But it's—respectable.

JERRY. And only the personal equation would make it endurable.

EILEEN. What do you mean by the personal equation?

JERRY. Well—in the case of reform—the reformer.

EILEEN. What do you think about reformers?

JERRY. Well—that depends somewhat upon the reformer.

EILEEN (*impetuously*). I've always wanted a criminal of my own—

JERRY. *What?*

EILEEN. To reform, of course.

JERRY. Try me.

EILEEN. You mean it?

JERRY. Rather.

EILEEN. I won't reform in any half way fashion

JERRY. Who wants a half baked respectability?

EILEEN. And you may not care to take the discipline.

JERRY. A highwayman is accustomed to *take*—most anything, isn't he?

EILEEN. Then—it's a bargain? (*Holds out hand.*)

JERRY (*taking it*). It is. (*Pauses.*) Do you mind telling me how you intend to go about it?

EILEEN (*crossing to table*). I hadn't thought of that.

JERRY. For, you see, I'm likely to be tangled in the meshes of the law while I am taking your course in respectability.

EILEEN (*suddenly*). Can you drive a car?

JERRY (*crossing to her*). With one hand—and my eyes shut.

EILEEN. Then—be chauffeur!

JERRY. *Your* chauffeur?

EILEEN. Our chauffeur. We're looking for one. What shall I call you?

JERRY (*after a moment*). How will *Jerry* do?

EILEEN. Fine!

JERRY (*bowing*). Then—*Jerry* at your service.

EILEEN. First of all, get rid of that suit. And if Aunt Lizzie spies that hat, that handkerchief—

JERRY (*laughingly*). Those boots and those gauntlets—

EILEEN. She'll upset our plans.

JERRY. Unfortunately, I haven't a chauffeur's uniform—on tap, so to speak.

EILEEN. But we *have*. Ask the gardener to show you the chauffeur's room. (*Pauses.*) No—best not to let anybody see you. (*Hastily draws him to doorway.*) It's the front room—over the garage. (*Points off stage.*)

JERRY. Trust me to find it.

EILEEN. And I hope the suit fits.

JERRY. So do I. Better a spruce highwayman than a slipshod chauffeur.

EILEEN. Hurry! Someone might come.

JERRY (*bending over her hand*). Adieu, fair advocate of reform! When I next greet you, I shall have been transformed by your magic touch into the grim semblance of conventionality, respectability and a steering wheel!

And, at this impressive moment, MARION appears on the stairway.

MARION. *Eileen!*

EILEEN (*as she starts away from JERRY*). Dear me,

Marion—how you startled me! (*Haughtily to JERRY.*)
That will do, Jerry. (*And JERRY disappears.*)

MARION. Who is that?

EILEEN. Our new chauffeur.

MARION. Where did you get him?

EILEEN. Didn't I tell you that Bess Roberts has been trying to find some one to adopt her chauffeur for the summer?

MARION (*crossing to her*). Did you telephone her?

EILEEN. I said I would—didn't I? (*Crosses to stairway.*)

MARION. Well, that man has made double quick time from the city. What was he saying that made you as red as a peony?

EILEEN (*on stairway*). *Saying?* Marion, what *could* he say?

MARION. A great many things. If the fellow is uncouth, Eileen, I'll dismiss him.

EILEEN. Indeed you won't! He is—perfectly—all right. (*Runs up the stairway.*)

(*MARION walks to the doorway and stands there listlessly for a few moments. Then, coming back slowly, she seats herself at one end of the broad window seat. For a time she is busy with her own thoughts; suddenly, she gazes intently out the window and then leans forward.*)

MARION. Mr. Blair! (*After a moment.*) I feel that I should apologize for luring you here with promise of a sunset which has failed to materialize.

BLAIR (*appearing from without*). Why hold yourself responsible for nature's caprices? Anyway—there are always other sunsets.

MARION. That's a pretty philosophy.

BLAIR. And the paler tints of the aftermath are often more appealing than the more gorgeous coloring.

MARION. Won't you sit here for a while? Perhaps nature will relent and send us a substitute.

BLAIR (*as he seats himself at the other end of the seat*). I doubt if she could send us anything lovelier than the peace, the quiet and the serenity of the present moment.

MARION. Do you feel that way about it? To me it's the most beautiful part of the day—and yet the very hush seems filled with a thousand voices if we could only hear and understand.

BLAIR (*lapsing into brogue*). Faith and it's the fairies that are weavin' their spell about ye—and the fairy music that is sweepin' the treetops—and the fairy voices that are whisperin' to ye!

MARION. Only an Irishman can talk like that!

BLAIR. And bein' an Irishman, the mother country has put the flame of patriotism into his soul, the witchery of her brogue upon his tongue—the love of a beautiful woman within his heart—

MARION (*slily*). And the touch of the Blarney stone upon his lips!

BLAIR. And, faith, what is the Blarney stone but a bit of an excuse for sayin' what otherwise a man would never dare to utter?

MARION. Why are you Irishmen so different from other people?

BLAIR. Because the spirit of romance never quite dies within us—because we are never too weary, too old or too heartsick to feel the breath of adventure upon our cheeks, to break away from the commonplace of the everyday—and to follow the twisting, beckoning, silvery gleam of the Road that Leads to Nowhere!

MARION. Somebody has told me that you are a scientist. I know better—you're a poet!

BLAIR (*dropping his brogue*). Not guilty. And, after that accusation, I'll forget the Irish part of me which sends my heads into the clouds and come back to America—where I belong.

MARION. Then you're not Irish?

BLAIR. Oh, yes I am—by birth. But my American father and my Irish mother saw fit to rear me in the land of the Stars and Stripes—so I count myself an American.

MARION. You love your adopted country?

BLAIR. So well that I fought for her. (*Rises.*)

MARION. Then you were in the war?

BLAIR. Yes.

MARION (*half to herself*). And you came back—safe.

BLAIR. Safe—but changed. One cannot forget—war.

MARION. Nor forgive.

BLAIR. You have lost someone?

MARION. My brother.

BLAIR. A glorious death.

MARION. But—death.

BLAIR. That is as one chooses to believe. (*Stands by her.*)

MARION. What do you mean?

BLAIR. Only that two people who have truly loved cannot be separated.

MARION. My brother and I were very dear to each other—but I think of him only as—gone.

BLAIR. Then you have willed it so.

MARION. I don't understand.

BLAIR. May I tell you my own story?

MARION. Please. (*He seats himself as before.*)

BLAIR. My best friend was killed—over there. For days I did not sleep—I saw only the torment, the horror, the unspeakable cruelty of everything—(*hesitates*).

MARION. Yes?

BLAIR. Then one day—I don't know how or why—I understood. I realized that there were other ways of suffering—ways that helped; and with a great emerging breath I came to a height from which I saw all differently—even the death of the one who had been my closest friend.

MARION. Such a realization would mean much to me.

BLAIR. Because it would bring with it the consciousness that your brother is near—in spirit.

MARION. I don't believe—I don't want that sort of nearness.

BLAIR. Don't misunderstand me—for I am thinking of a spiritualism of soul which lifts us and satisfies us—and is in accord not only with our reason but with the traditions of our aspirations after faith and philosophy. (*Pauses.*) I fear I have tired you with my dissertation. (*Rises.*)

MARION. On the contrary, you've helped me very much—and I thank you. (*Rises.*)

BLAIR. Perhaps you will permit me to come again—very soon?

MARION. We are all hoping that you will. (*As he takes her hand.*) Good bye. (*He disappears.*)

MARION crosses and seats herself right of table. BOBBY appears in doorway and stands looking intently off stage for a moment. Then he runs to MARION.

BOBBY (*perching on the right arm of the chair*). Who is the strange man, Aunt Marion?

MARION. Our next door neighbor, Bobby. (*Draws him to her.*) *

BOBBY. He caught me up and held me very close to him—and I think he likes me. We can always tell when people like us, can't we, Aunt Marion?

MARION. Always. (*Pauses.*) Has it been a happy birthday, dear?

BOBBY. As happy as it could be—without father. (*Wistfully.*) It's pretty hard for a fellow to grow up without a father—isn't it?

MARION. Don't—Bobby.

BOBBY. Sometimes I feel that if I turn around quickly, he'll be there—laughing at me. And, then sometimes, I think I hear his whistle. Listen, Aunt Marion, I can do it! (*Whistles.*)

MARION. Try it again, Bobby. (*After the second effort.*) That's better.

BOBBY. Don't you think he *must* be near us, today, Aunt Marion? Today—when I'm ten years old?

MARION. For the first time, Bobby, I feel that he is!

BOBBY (*jumping down*). I'm going now. I just ran in for a moment—to keep you from being lonesome.

MARION (*as she kisses him*). Then, hurry back, dear, for I'm not going to be lonesome—any more. (*He runs off stage through doorway.*)

(*For a time there is perfect silence as she sits engrossed in her thoughts. Suddenly—clear, distinct and close at hand comes a whistle—Bob's whistle. She lays down her book—in bewilderment. In a moment the whistle is repeated. She starts to her feet.*)

THE VOICE (*in the vicinity of the doorway*). Sis

—dear old sis—do you think a little thing like death can separate us?

MARION. Oh! Oh!

THE VOICE (*now in the vicinity of the stairway*). I've waited so long for you to understand—for you to call me—but you wouldn't—you wouldn't— (MARION *still stands stupefied—silent*). Can't you see me, Marion? Don't you know me?

MARION (*silence for a moment—then she goes forward with outstretched hands*). Oh Bob—Bob!

CURTAIN.

OUT OF THE STILLNESS

THE SECOND ACT.

SCENE: *Again the hall of the Deering home; and this time, the audience faces the stairway, which is at center of back stage. Right of the stairway is the piano; to its left is a small door (hidden by the stairway in Act I.) To the right of this door hangs a piece of tapestry. The window seat is now at the left of stage as is the open doorway; while, down left, is the dining room door, the telephone stand and chair, and the small table. The table is down right and the large chair near by is now turned and facing audience. The hassock is at center; the chair left of stairway is drawn further back; and the chair to right of doorway remains the same. The small chair remains at left of table.*

The curtain rises to music off stage. Against the right of the doorway leans JERRY, apparently lost in thought. LUCY enters from dining room, bearing tray of punch glasses. As she spies him, she hesitates, then crosses room and places tray upon table.

LUCY (*softly*). Jerry! (No answer.) Jerry! (Still no response.) Jerry! (And LUCY's tone becomes not only louder but a trifle sharp.)

JERRY. I beg your pardon. Did you speak?

LUCY. Only three times.

JERRY (*lightly*). Three times and the charm, you know.

LUCY. Then it must have broken the charm. Were you star-gazing?

JERRY. One might call it that, I suppose.

LUCY (*sarcastically*). Star-gazing—without looking at the sky!

JERRY. There are earthly stars, too, you know. (*Half to himself.*) And they're often farther away than the heavenly ones.

LUCY. I don't understand you, Jerry.

JERRY. The highest compliment you can pay me.

LUCY. And you don't talk a bit like a chauffeur.

JERRY. Meaning that my vocabulary should reek with such terms as carburetors, cylinders and spark plugs?

LUCY. I mean that you might at least be friendly-like. (*With a toss of her head.*) The last chauffeur didn't need dynamite to wake him up!

JERRY (*indifferently*). Sorry that I don't qualify.

LUCY (*after a pause*). Did you ever hear lovelier music?

JERRY. I haven't been listening.

LUCY (*coming closer*). I love to dance. Don't you?

JERRY. Depends.

LUCY. And—wouldn't it be heavenly—out there—under the moonlight?

JERRY (*carelessly*). Looks as if it might rain.

LUCY (*flouncing off to center*). What you need is a book on manners, Mr. Chauffeur—

JERRY. I haven't time for the superficial at present, my dear Lucy. I'm too busy keeping track of my morals.

LUCY. Don't call me your dear Lucy. (*Coquettishly.*)

JERRY. Just as you say. I used the term only after your suggestion that my manners were not all they should be.

LUCY (*angrily*). Well, now I am going. (*Crosses and takes her tray.*)

JERRY (*cheerfully*). Well, we've had a pleasant little chat, haven't we?

LUCY (*as she dashes past him through the doorway*). Too pleasant to last! (*Goes off*.)

JERRY *laughs to himself, then suddenly bends forward and becomes intent upon someone—or something—in his range of vision. The someone proves to be EILEEN.*

EILEEN (*as she comes through the doorway*). Well?

JERRY. Well—what?

EILEEN. You've been standing here and staring at me for the last half hour.

JERRY (*following her into the room*). Can't a criminal look at his reformer?

EILEEN. Jerry! You're laughing!

JERRY. For sheer happiness.

EILEEN. And you're not to speak of yourself as a criminal.

JERRY. I keep forgetting that I am—cured.

EILEEN (*anxiously*). But you *are* cured—aren't you?

JERRY. Absolutely.

EILEEN. And in just three weeks.

JERRY. Three weeks to a day. What correspondence course can beat that?

EILEEN. Would you have reformed—without me?

JERRY. Never.

EILEEN. You've done it all—for me?

JERRY (*slipping his arm around her*). For you. I'd do most anything—for you.

EILEEN (*making no effort to move away from him*). Jerry—you're too familiar.

JERRY. But the treatment of the case promised that you would let me be your equal—didn't it?

EILEEN. Yes—but—

JERRY. Then that's why I—dare.

EILEEN. You'll never go back to the road?

JERRY. Not while I have my good angel to hold me back.

EILEEN (*moving away from him*). But I'm not an angel, Jerry. Aunt Lizzie says I'm the other thing.

JERRY. Aunt Lizzie doesn't know everything.

EILEEN. And she's never recognized you—that's one comfort. (*Sighs.*) Jerry?

JERRY. Yes?

EILEEN. Does the old life ever tempt you?

JERRY. It might—on a night like this.

EILEEN. How?

JERRY. The long stretch of country road—the friendly shade of the trees—the thrill—the suspense—the excitement—can't you understand?

EILEEN (*rushing to him*). Oh, Jerry, don't do it—*don't do it!*

JERRY. Then help me to forget the lure of it all.

EILEEN. Help you? *How?*

JERRY. Dance with me—out there under the trees—in the moonlight—Just the two of us!

EILEEN. But that limp!

JERRY (*walking toward right*). Don't bother about that. It's mine for keeps.

EILEEN. *For keeps?* Can a chauffeur's monkey wrench do all that damage?

JERRY. *Monkey wrench?* It was an Argonne bullet.

EILEEN. You were in the war?

JERRY. Well—rather. Why do you look so surprised?

EILEEN. A *highwayman* in the war!

JERRY. That's where I learned my job. Pointing pistols at Kamerads who held up their hands without any urging has come to be a habit.

EILEEN. *Really*, Jerry?

JERRY (*coming close to her*). Are you coming with me?

EILEEN (*in a whisper*). Why not?

And they dance slowly out of the open doorway and into the yard beyond. Hardly has the last strain of the music died away, when AUNT LIZZIE enters from the dining room, followed by an evidently harassed MRS. DEERING.

MRS. D. But, Lizzie—times have changed—

AUNT L. And evidently morals have changed. (*Sits in chair by table.*) Sometimes I wonder if they haven't disappeared along with the good old-fashioned dresses that had skirts and necks.

MRS. D. (*sitting in chair by telephone*). Fashion sets a certain standard—you cannot expect a girl to ignore it.

AUNT L. And modesty, like heavy stockings and turkey tail fans has gone out of style. (*Grimly.*) I see.

MRS. D. It isn't so bad as all that; it's merely another viewpoint. See how differently even the older women dress.

AUNT L. I'm seeing all right. If I didn't know your age, Alice, and had to judge from your clothes—(*hesitates*).

MRS. D. Well?

AUNT L. I should infer that, as yet, you had not reached the years of discretion.

MRS. D. (*on the defensive*). A woman should look as well as she can—

AUNT L. But not as young as she can. Great heavens, Alice, the Lord gives us wrinkles to show that our souls have grown—that we're not cases of arrested development. Why should you wish to wipe out all traces of human experience?

MRS. D. It is not necessary to discuss the matter further. (*Rises.*) Shall we go back to the dancing?

AUNT L. And watch the younger generation cutting a lot of silly capers to music? I prefer to stay here.

MRS. D. Just as you wish, of course.

AUNT L. (*abruptly*). Did you bring all the silver and the jewels with you from the city?

MRS. D. Practically all.

AUNT L. That was foolish.

MRS. D. Not when you consider the fact that we are expecting to entertain a great deal.

AUNT L. Have you a safe?

MRS. D. Of course. And it is well hidden.

AUNT L. Where?

MRS. D. In a small room off there. (*Points to door left of stairway.*) The door is hardly discernible; we always keep it locked; and only the members of the family know where the key is hidden.

AUNT L. On an occasion of this kind, with all doors and windows open, pillaging would be quite a temptation to any wandering tramp.

MRS. D. You're thinking of your highwayman.

AUNT L. I'm thinking of nobody in particular.

MRS. D. And nobody in particular is thinking of us. The location of the safe is secret.

AUNT L. A secret shared is no longer a secret.

MRS. D. Except when it is shared only by members of the same family.

AUNT L. Sometimes, members of the same family become indiscreet.

MRS. D. Even granting that—one's friends are usually to be trusted.

AUNT L. I shouldn't care to trust all of yours. (*Sharply.*) Who is this latest addition to your house party?

MRS. D. Alfred Tevis' sister—Cecile. She is charming.

AUNT L. She tries to be. How did you happen to invite her?

MRS. D. She was visiting near by—Alfred mentioned it—

AUNT L. Yes—of course he did—

MRS. D. So we asked her for the week-end.

As EILEEN appears at doorway.

MRS. D. Eileen—why aren't you dancing? (*Crosses to center.*)

EILEEN. I have been.

MRS. D. Where is your partner?

EILEEN (*carelessly*). How should I know? (*Sits on arm of chair right of doorway.*) I came out in the yard to remind Jerry that I want the car at seven-thirty tomorrow morning.

MRS. D. You could have chosen another time to deliver the message.

EILEEN. But I didn't. (To AUNT LIZZIE.) Want to drive with me, Aunt Lizzie? You'll be the only one up at that time.

AUNT L. *Drive with you?* I'd rather shoot the chutes.

EILEEN. Jerry says I'm a wonder.

AUNT L. Then he is a misguided young man.

MRS. D. (*standing back of Aunt Lizzie's chair*). But a splendid chauffeur. Let *him* drive you, Lizzie. You'll enjoy it.

EILEEN. He'd scare you to death, Aunt Lizzie.

MRS. D. Nonsense! He's exceedingly careful.

AUNT L. Is there any reason that I should not meet this Jerry—or whatever you call him?

MRS. D. I don't understand.

AUNT L. Well, perhaps Eileen does. She's always on hand when I try to communicate with him.

EILEEN. You do imagine the queerest things, Aunt Lizzie.

AUNT L. Imagine *nothing*! Yesterday I asked him to stop the car and get a flower for me—out popped Eileen before he could make a move; then I addressed a few questions to him—which Eileen answered; and when I tried to sit by him on the return journey, I was unceremoniously bundled into the tonneau.

MRS. D. Eileen was doubtless looking out for your comfort, Lizzie.

EILEEN. Of course. (*Crosses to right of stage*.)

MRS. D. For what other motive could there be? (*As JERRY passes the doorway*.) Jerry! Will you come here for a moment? (*JERRY enters*.) Tomorrow, you will take the small car and drive into the city. I have a number of errands for you. At two, we'll say.

JERRY. Yes, Mrs. Deering.

AUNT L. (*who has been eagerly scanning him*). Young man, I've seen you before.

JERRY (*very respectfully*). I have been Mrs. Deering's chauffeur ever since your arrival.

AUNT L. I've seen you somewhere *before* my arrival.

JERRY. Perhaps I have driven for some of your friends.

AUNT L. And perhaps you haven't. I can't place you now—but it will come to me. Those things always do.

Enter MARION and SEYMOUR from dining room, followed by TOM and BESS.

MARION. Tom and Bess are hunting for you, mother. (*As JERRY starts to leave.*) Wait a moment, Jerry. (*Crosses to front of stairway, as JERRY moves to right of stage and EILEEN stands by table.*)

MRS. D. (*crossing to TOM and BESS who stand at left of stage*). Surely you're not saying goodnight already.

TOM. Oh, but we are—much to our regret.

BESS. You see, the Allens who are farther up the road, are having a dance to night—so they made us promise to share the evening.

SEYMOUR (*who is standing by the telephone*). Driving back to town after the dance?

TOM. Sure. Business in the morning—and all that.

SEYMOUR. Better beware of the highwayman.

TOM. I'm ready for him. Revolver right here. (*Patting his pocket.*)

BESS. And I'll hide my pearls in the tool box. He'll never think of looking for them there.

MARION. Bess—here's Jerry. (*Motions to JERRY.*)

BESS (*puzzled*). I don't believe that I know—Jerry.

MARION. Your own chauffeur whom you transferred to us?

BESS. *My* chauffeur! I never saw the man before in all my life.

MARION. But Eileen said—

EILEEN (*wildly*). Bess *did* tell me that she wanted a place for her chauffeur.

BESS. Of course I did. But, after that, we decided to stay home during the summer, and naturally kept him.

MARION. But, Eileen—you said that you telephoned.

JERRY (*standing by EILEEN*). Pardon me, Miss Deering, but I think I can explain. The fault is entirely mine. When I applied for the position, Miss Eileen asked if I were the chauffeur whom she had engaged—and I said I *was*. She took me.

BESS. But, Eileen—you never even said that you wanted our chauffeur.

EILEEN. Oh, yes, I did, Bess—you've just forgotten. (*Aside to JERRY in a whisper.*) Thank you, Ananias.

JERRY (*whispering back*). Don't mention it, Sapphira.

MRS. D. I am sorry that you obtained your position under false pretenses, Jerry.

JERRY (*smiling*). But you'll let me stay? You see, I really want the job.

MRS. D. You may stay for the present. (*JERRY bows and goes out doorway.*)

BESS (*as she looks after him*). And to think that you confused him with my good old John who is fifty, cross-eyed, and has a wart on his nose.

TONY (*seizing her arm*). Off you go, after that remark. Susceptible girls aren't to be trusted when good looking chauffeurs are about. Goodnight, Mrs. Deering—it's been a bully party—

BESS. And we hate to tear ourselves away. Good-night, Miss Lizzie—goodnight, Byrne—and Marion. Goodnight Eileen.

EILEEN. Mother and I will go out with you. (*Joins Mrs. D. and together with Tom and Bess they pass out dining room door.*)

MARION. Tired, Aunt Lizzie?

AUNT L. I'm tired of all this foolishness. (*Joins Marion at stairway.*)

MARION. Surely you're not going to bed.

AUNT L. Why not? It's bed time.

MARION. Then let me come along and have a quiet little chat with you. Byrne won't mind the separation.

AUNT L. Not tonight, my dear. Anyway, I fancy that your young man needs you more than I do. Good-night.

MARION. Goodnight, Aunt Lizzie.

AUNT L. (*half way up the stairs*). Marion, does that young Jerry limp?

MARION. Just a little. It's hardly noticeable. Why?

AUNT L. I just wanted to know—that's all. (*Goes up stairs.*)

SEYMOUR. Marion—where's Jane?

MARION (*sitting by table*). Gone to the city. She left on the noon train.

SEYMOUR. What's the trouble?

MARION. No trouble at all. The literary light who wishes her to illustrate his book desired a conference.

SEYMOUR (*sitting by telephone*). Then I suppose I'll have to wait. (*Sighs.*)

MARION. I don't see any other way out of it. What's *your* trouble?

SEYMOUR (*dramatically*). Genius is simmering!

MARION. You mean—the picture?

SEYMOUR. *The* picture. I have it in my mind, Marion, the great glorious plan of it—but I need Jane's help in evolving the details.

MARION. Is Jane as necessary as all that?

SEYMOUR. Jane's the best sort of a fellow—never too busy to listen. Often she notices the very points which I have overlooked.

MARION. I'd express it more generously, Byrne. In fact, I'd say that Jane's whimsical fancy as well as her unfailing instinct, fans your spark of genius into a flame. (*Pause.*) You don't like that, do you?

SEYMOUR. No man likes to be told that he owes his genius to a woman.

MARION. On the other hand, every man, at some time or other, realizes that behind his truest achievement there is a woman's inspiration.

SEYMOUR. Perhaps you think that I have no—genius.

MARION. I know that you have it. But, I still say that Jane is a potent factor in developing it.

SEYMOUR. I've never taken Jane that seriously.

MARION. None of us has taken Jane seriously. We all accept the time, the interest, the sympathy and the understanding which she so generously gives—without a thought of its real value.

SEYMOUR. Jane is the best kind of a friend—and she's meant a lot to me.

MARION. Indeed she has. In those long, feverish Art League days, you would have given up the struggle if it hadn't been for her, wouldn't you?

SEYMOUR. Undoubtedly.

MARION. And in the first glory of your success,

she planned and schemed for you as no other would have done.

SEYMOUR. Good old pal!

MARION. Even three weeks ago when you would have yielded to the depression which was slowly sapping your ambition, she—figuratively speaking—forced the palette into your hand.

SEYMOUR (*seriously*). She did.

MARION. And now—when you are on the eve of painting your new picture, your great picture—when you are once more your old, enthusiastic, aspiring self—you turn to Jane.

SEYMOUR. I've never thought of it in exactly that way.

MARION (*rising*). Oh, the blindness of you men—the supreme egotism! You won't understand—you won't. (*Stands back of chair.*)

SEYMOUR. But, Marion, I've been a good friend to Jane—it isn't altogether one-sided.

MARION. Of course you've been a good friend—you're a good friend to all of us. You'd protect us in every way you could; you'd never hesitate to do anything we ask. In fact, you should wear armor instead of broadcloth and should carry a lance instead of a palette.

SEYMOUR. Well—what of it?

MARION. Did you ever stop to think that the dashing knight while he was ostentatiously and theatrically rescuing the maiden, sometimes failed to give her—just what she wanted?

SEYMOUR (*rising*). I don't understand you, Marion.

MARION. Then I shall change my figure of speech and become art critic—if you don't mind.

SEYMOUR. Why should I mind?

MARION. Your work is exquisite, Byrne—it is al-

most faultless—it is perfect in coloring, symmetry and technique.

SEYMOUR. Do you really feel that way about it, Marion?

MARION (*sitting on arm of chair*). I do. But—

SEYMOUR (*crossing to her*). Why spoil it with a *but*?

MARION. Your pictures lack soul. And there is only one way to supply the soul.

SEYMOUR. And that?

MARION. Love.

SEYMOUR. Love—of a woman?

MARION. Of a woman. When you find that, Byrne, your brush will be a magic one.

SEYMOUR. Where shall I find the woman to work this miracle?

MARION. That is for you to discover.

SEYMOUR. Perhaps, in you, Marion.

MARION. In *me*? Don't turn this heart to heart talk into a jest, Byrne.

SEYMOUR. You could give me that inspiration.

MARION (*almost harshly*). I could give you—nothing.

SEYMOUR. Don't say that, Marion.

MARION. But it is true—oh so very true. In your work I'd be an outsider, because—

SEYMOUR. Because—what?

MARION. Let's give the whimsical turn to it, Byrne. Because I'm not equal to wrestling with the artistic temperament three hundred and sixty-five days in the year!

SEYMOUR. *Marion!*

MARION. Anymore than you could stand my maddeningly practical characteristics. It's too funny to talk about!

SEYMOUR (*turning aside*). It doesn't seem funny to me.

MARION. It will when you think about it seriously. (*Slips an arm about his neck*). Let's not spoil our good friendship at this late date, Byrne, and anyway—(*hesitates*).

SEYMOUR. Yes?

MARION. I'm going to help you find your inspiration. (*Lightly after a moment*.) Time for us to wander back, isn't it? Poor Mr. Tevis is to be burdened with my inappreciative self, during the next dance. (*Crosses to left*.)

SEYMOUR. And his sister falls to me.

MARION. The fair Cecile! She is what Eileen would call—a vanquishing vamp. Speaking of Eileen, this chauffeur affair worries me. She knew all along that Jerry had not been in Bess Roberts' employ.

SEYMOUR. The ways of Eileen—like those of providence—are past finding out.

BOBBY *at door*.

MARION. He seems a quiet, gentlemanly fellow—but—(*as BOBBY enters at dining room door*). Looking for me, Bobby boy?

BOBBY. Not this time, Aunt Marion. (*Importantly*.) Mr. Blair is going to meet me here.

MARION. Dear me, how important you are! What is the cause of this conference?

BOBBY. Nothing special. We just want to talk.

MARION. You and Mr. Blair are great friends, aren't you?

BOBBY (*patting her hand*). Next to you, Aunt Marion, he's my best friend.

MARION. Then he has a lot to live up to!

MARION and SEYMOUR *pass out dining room door*.

BOBBY *runs to back of stage.* BLAIR, *without seeing him, appears at doorway and seats himself at table.* BOBBY *tiptoes behind him and places his hands over Blair's eyes.*

BLAIR. Help! The highwayman!

BOBBY (*running to Blair's left*). Did you really think it was the highwayman, Mr. Blair?

BLAIR. To be quite frank, Bobby, I had my suspicions. You can't tell about highwaymen these days.

BOBBY (*pulling the hassock to Blair's left and seating himself*). I thought you'd never come.

BLAIR. Unfortunately, one cannot, at will, disregard the rights of a dancing partner.

BOBBY. Why—unfortunately?

BLAIR. That's one of the things you will learn when you grow up.

BOBBY. Girls don't bother me.

BLAIR. A safe and sane slogan—stick to it.

BOBBY. For when I grow up, I intend to marry Aunt Marion.

BLAIR. Oh—do you? Suppose some other fellow gets ahead of you.

BOBBY. She'll never like anyone as well as she likes me.

BLAIR. But you may change *your* mind. There are all kinds of girls, you know.

BOBBY. Are there? I thought there were only two kinds.

BLAIR. And what are the two kinds, old man?

BOBBY. The girls men like and the girls they don't.

BLAIR (*laughing*). Where did you get your worldly wisdom?

BOBBY. Why—I just know—that's all. (*Pauses.*) Say, Mr. Blair, when are we going fishing?

BLAIR. Well—let's say—day after tomorrow.

BOBBY. Bully!

BLAIR. And this time I think we'll camp out all night.

BOBBY. Honest?

BLAIR. Honest to goodness. Aunt Marion will trust you to me, I think.

BOBBY. Course she will. Will there be a camp fire?

BLAIR. How else can we cook our meals?

BOBBY. And shall we sleep on the ground?

BLAIR. Sure thing. We're going to be real campers. Rifles by our sides and all that.

BOBBY. But there aren't really any Indians about.

BLAIR. We can pretend, can't we?

BOBBY (*ecstatically*). You just understand everything, Mr. Blair. (*Puts his hand on Blair's*). Sometimes, I think you're just like father.

BLAIR (*drawing Bobby to him*). That's just what I want to be, old fellow.

BOBBY. We've had a jolly time together, haven't we?

BLAIR. The jolliest time in the world.

BOBBY. And I'm going to miss you dreadfully when you go away. Why don't you stay here always?

BLAIR. I wish I could.

BOBBY. It's a bully place, even if the old German *did* live here.

BLAIR. Have you ever wondered just where that old German kept all the important papers and documents he was stealing from the United States?

BOBBY. Why, he'd keep them in a safe, wouldn't he?

BLAIR. I wonder. Wouldn't a little room all to itself be better?

BOBBY. But there isn't any little room all to itself.

BLAIR. Are you sure?

BOBBY (*excitedly*). Yes there is, too. (*Jumps up and runs to back of stage.*) Off here. (*Points to door.*) It's square, and has little windows way up at the top, so that nobody can look in.

BLAIR (*following him*). But couldn't a person crawl into the window?

BOBBY. Not much. Why the windows aren't bigger than *this*. (*Measures.*)

BLAIR. Do you use this room for a playhouse?

BOBBY. No *sir*. The safe's in there.

BLAIR. The *safe*?

BOBBY. And the door is always locked.

BLAIR. That's interesting.

BOBBY. Nobody but the family is supposed to know where the key is kept.

BLAIR. The *key*?

BOBBY. But *I* know. One day I saw mother hanging it up. Where do you think it is?

BLAIR. I could never guess.

BOBBY. Just behind the edge of that tapestry up there. Even when you're ever so close you can't see. (*Whistle sounds off stage.*) Listen! That means Jerry has found my kite. He was to whistle if he came across it.

BLAIR. Then run right along and don't mind me. (*As BOBBY runs to doorway.*) And Bobby?

BOBBY (*turning*). Yes, Mr. Blair.

BLAIR. Will you tell Jerry that I'd like to see him for just a moment?

BOBBY. Sure. (*Goes out doorway.*)

(BLAIR quickly crosses to tapestry, raises corner and looks closely. He then takes paper and pencil from

his pocket and writes busily for a few moments. JERRY appears at doorway.)

JERRY. You wish to see me, sir?

BLAIR. Just for a moment, Jerry. (*Pauses.*) Are you on duty this evening?

JERRY. Quite free, sir.

BLAIR. You could go to the station for me—and send this telegram?

JERRY. I am not at liberty to take the car, Mr. Blair.

BLAIR. I see.

JERRY. But I can use Miss Eileen's saddle horse.

BLAIR. She wouldn't object?

JERRY. I'm sure she wouldn't.

BLAIR. This is an important message and I am anxious to send it tonight. For various reasons, I can't go myself.

JERRY. I will be glad to take it, sir.

BLAIR (*as he hands the paper*). I may trust you to regard this errand as a confidential one?

JERRY. You may, sir.

BLAIR. And to make no mention of the message?

JERRY. I'll be quite prudent, Mr. Blair.

BLAIR. Thank you. It is needless for me to add that this is a *real* favor. (*JERRY bows and withdraws.*)

MARION *enters from dining room almost immediately.*

MARION. Why I thought Bobby was here with you.

BLAIR (*meeting her*). I'm deserted. And all on account of a chauffeur's whistle. Act as substitute, won't you?

MARION. Haven't you this dance?

BLAIR. Not unless you give it to me.

MARION. I'd much rather talk out here. (*Crosses and sits by table.*)

BLAIR. So should I. (*Sits on edge of table at Marion's right.*)

MARION. We should tabulate our likes and dislikes—and then compare lists. I fancy that the lists would be almost identical.

BLAIR. Similarity of tastes — congeniality in thought—agreement in opinions. Perhaps this accounts for the friendship which we have formed in these few weeks. I may call it friendship, may I not, Marion?

MARION. The very truest friendship I have ever known, Sheridan. You see, I'm quite frank about it.

BLAIR. Added to all this has been our common love of Bobby.

MARION. You have meant much to Bobby. You have given him the companionship, the interest and the outdoor life which he so needed. (*Pauses.*) You have done for him what Bob would have done.

BLAIR. It makes me very happy to have you say that.

MARION. Then it is a fair return for the happiness which you have brought to me.

BLAIR. To you? I don't understand.

MARION. When I first met you, Sheridan, I was yielding to an overwhelming depression.

BLAIR. The loss of your brother?

MARION. Yes. Life seemed to be only—death.

BLAIR. While in reality—

MARION. Death is only— life.

BLAIR. My few words, in themselves, could not have changed you. You must have had some proof, some demonstration.

MARION. I did. (*Pauses.*) Do you remember saying that the barrier between Bob and me was of my own willing?

BLAIR. Yes.

MARION. That a consciousness of his presence—in spirit—would help me?

BLAIR. And it *did* help.

MARION. Then—you know?

BLAIR. Could anything else have given you your present peace—and your quiet happiness?

MARION. On that very afternoon when you told me—I felt, for the first time, that he was near. Out of the stillness came his whistle—his dear old whistle—and then his voice.

BLAIR. Did it frighten you?

MARION. I had only the consciousness that it was Bob—that he had come back to me. That consciousness has never left me.

BLAIR. Then you are never—alone?

MARION. Never. Even if the voice does not come, I know that Bob is still a vital part of my life—is always with me.

BLAIR. Have you told the others?

MARION. Only Jane. No one else would understand. They all think my changed attitude and my new outlook are due to the fact that I am forgetting.

BLAIR. And they would not believe that death can bridge the gulf with a message that brings a deeper spiritual comprehension of immortality.

MARION. So now you know just what you have done for me—how grateful I am—how truly I count you my friend.

BLAIR (*as he covers her hand with his*). Will you—always—let me be your friend—whatever happens?

MARION. Always. Why do you ask?

BLAIR. Because friendship is often put to the test. Promise me that—however different conditions may be—you will never forget—this night.

BOBBY *at doorway.*

MARION. I promise. (*As BOBBY enters from doorway.*) Bobby, dear, you should not be in the grounds at this late hour.

(BLAIR *walks back stage.*)

BOBBY. But I went for my kite. Jerry found it. (*Impressively.*) Jerry's gone!

MARION. *Gone?* Gone where?

BOBBY. I don't know.

MARION. In the car?

BOBBY. No—on horseback.

MARION. Are you sure, Bobby?

BOBBY. Of course I'm sure. I saw him.

MARION. Why should he be leaving the house without permission? (*Rises.*) I shall speak to mother about it.

BLAIR (*detaining her*). But, Marion, why shouldn't he be leaving? (*Lapsing into brogue as he catches up BOBBY.*) Faith, and Bobby and I'll be after tellin' you that midsummer magic, moonlight witchery and the dreams o' love are quite enough to be lurin' any young lad into the realm of fantasy and fancy!

MARION (*imitating the brogue*). Your Irish tongue will have its way. (*In her usual tone.*) Come back from fancy to fact, Sheridan, and find your next partner. And as for you, Bobby, it's long past bedtime.

BOBBY. But it's a party.

MARION. Parties grow tiresome, don't they, dear? And isn't your own little bed the very best place for you right now?

BOBBY (*after a pause*). I believe it is, Aunt Marion.

MARION (*kissing him*). Then goodnight, dear, and run along.

BLAIR. And don't forget what's going to happen day after tomorrow.

BOBBY. You bet I won't forget. (*He watches BLAIR and MARION as they go out at dining room door, then goes slowly up the stairway.*)

Almost immediately, TEVIS appears at doorway.

TEVIS. Wait, boy. (*BOBBY turns in surprise.*) Do you know my sister when you see her?

BOBBY. Yes, Mr. Tevis.

TEVIS. Then will you tell her that I wish to speak to her — here — immediately? (*Takes money from pocket.*) Here's a quarter if you'll be quick about it.

BOBBY (*with dignity*). Thank you, Mr. Tevis, but I don't want to be paid for being polite. (*Walks slowly out dining room door.*)

TEVIS, *left to himself, moves restlessly about the room, as if in search of something. Then the door opens and CECILE enters—beautifully gowne, striking in appearance, exceedingly sophisticated, and of decided mannerisms.*

CECILE. So, at last, I am to be favored with an explanation, my dear—brother; I believe it is this time? (*Crosses to table.*)

TEVIS (*calmly lighting a cigarette*). What explanation is necessary? I happened to mention that my sister was in a nearby town; naturally, Mrs. Deering included you in the house party.

CECILE. I do not question Mrs. Deering's hospitable impulse, but I am puzzling over your sudden desire for me to share your pleasure. It isn't like you. (*Sits.*)

TEVIS. Aren't you enjoying your new surroundings?

CECILE. *Immensely.* And I find Mr. Blair—charming.

TEVIS. You will leave Mr. Blair entirely out of your calculations.

CECILE. Indeed? By this time, you should be aware that it is quite impossible for me to leave any attractive man out of my calculations.

TEVIS. My remark concerning Mr. Blair is not a request; it is a command.

CECILE (*mockingly*). Dear me! How masterful we are! Would it be worth while for me to utter a protest in regard to your flirtatious ways with the doll-faced widow?

TEVIS. Natalie can help me with what I have to do. Hence the devotion.

CECILE. A means to an end? I see. (*Rises.*) Suppose we come to the point, Alfred, for I realize perfectly well that only some serious difficulty would have resulted in this gracefully managed summons. (*Crosses to left.*)

TEVIS (*sneeringly*). Woman's divine and ever-present intuition!

CECILE. Perhaps. I prefer to designate it as a natural conclusion based upon previous association with you. (*Pauses.*) Well—what's the trouble?

TEVIS (*turning away from her*). I've not succeeded.

CECILE. And why? Is courage failing at the crucial moment? Has your hand lost its cunning? Or is it that conscience doth make cowards of us all?

TEVIS. I've lacked the opportunity. In all these three weeks, I've never been able to lay my hand upon the key to the room where the document is hidden.

CECILE. Won't you explain? For I must remind you that when you undertook this task, my own feeble intelligence was not deemed worthy to grapple with

the problem. (*Sits by telephone.*) Consequently, I am quite ignorant of details.

TEVIS. You will remember that, at the time of Von Holz's escape from the house, he left an important envelope behind a sliding panel in the room where his valuable papers were kept.

CECILE (*calmly powdering her nose*). Extremely careless of our trusted friend.

TEVIS. And in the envelope was the plan of a perfected American airplane.

CECILE. Why bother about tiresome old airplanes? The war is over.

TEVIS (*significantly*). There will be another one. (*Crosses to her.*) This is no trivial matter, Cecile, and it is not to your advantage to be indifferent.

CECILE (*dropping her indifference and changing her tone.*) That is exactly what I've been waiting for you to say. Now—I'll listen.

TEVIS. This hiding place was known only to Von Holz and to the proper authorities and—(*hesitates*).

CECILE. Yes?

TEVIS. To Von Holz's own servant, Schauff.

CECILE. It isn't like Von Holz to trust an inferior.

TEVIS. He didn't. Schauff found out—in his own way.

CECILE. I see. Hurry with your story—our absence will cause comment.

TEVIS. Immediately upon Von Holz's death, Schauff departed for New York, where at his request I met him.

CECILE. And shared the secret, of course. The important document, I presume, was to be handed over to the United States, in return for a substantial reward.

TEVIS. Naturally.

CECILE. It is no honor to be chosen by a man like Schauff.

TEVIS. The personal element did not enter into the transaction. He remembered only my services to Von Holz, and knew that I could be tempted—

CECILE. By the dollar sign. Go on.

TEVIS. This house had just been sold to the Deerings—

CECILE (*rising*). And, naturally, you were the very one to win your way to the family circle—and to do the deed. (*Laughing.*) Alfred, in the role of Prince Charming is—irresistible!

TEVIS. An introduction to Natalie was easily accomplished; the invitation to their home followed; and for three weeks I have been vainly endeavoring to gain possession of the key. (*Points.*) That is the door to the room.

CECILE (*walking back stage*). I see. (*Turns.*) And a skeleton key—

TEVIS. Won't work. The original article was made to order and its hiding place is known only to members of the family.

CECILE. Why is it so zealously guarded?

TEVIS. The room contains a safe—evidently holding the family valuables.

CECILE. Ah—a safe! (*Hurries to him at center.*) Jewels, perhaps.

TEVIS (*roughly*). We've no time for that, Cecile.

CECILE (*scornfully*). And you've learned nothing in these three weeks!

TEVIS. Only that the key is in this room!

CECILE. Easy work, then.

TEVIS. Not so easy when one is a guest—when the times for searching are few and far between—and when there is someone watching.

CECILE. What do you mean?

TEVIS. Blair.

CECILE. Impossible! He is not the type.

TEVIS. I have every reason to believe that the government has sent him out.

CECILE. *What* government?

TEVIS. Von Holz's government, of course. The United States has no inkling of the affair.

CECILE. What makes you suspect him?

TEVIS. His renting the next door house—his constant watching—

CECILE. But why should he suspect *you*?

TEVIS. Merely, my presence here—and the fact that I have been, heretofore, an agent of Von Holz.

CECILE (*after a pause*). Well—and what am I to do? (*Walks to left—down stage*.)

TEVIS (*following her*). For one thing, you're to throw suspicion upon Blair.

CECILE. How?

TEVIS. I trust that to your wits.

CECILE (*suddenly*). My crystal!

TEVIS. You have it with you?

CECILE. I always have it. Nothing brings people so quickly to my way of thinking as a touch of the occult. What else?

TEVIS. You're to get that envelope.

CECILE (*sarcastically*). Your confidence in my ability is flattering—but how am I to achieve all this—without a key?

TEVIS. You will have the key—tonight.

CECILE (*impatiently*). *Tonight!* When, already, you have wasted three weeks!

TEVIS. I am playing my last card—with Natalie. And, this time, I shall win.

CECILE. How shall I know that you are successful?

TEVIS. In some way or other, I will tell you that —*all's well*—and later on, I'll slip you the key. (*Hands her paper.*) Here is the explanation of the sliding panel behind which you will find the envelope.

CECILE. Have you considered the possibility of my detection?

TEVIS. Nothing like that will happen. You will wait until the house is quiet—

CECILE (*mockingly*). And then glide stealthily and noiselessly down the stairway—in the approved fashion of the traditional ghost—

TEVIS (*suddenly*). Ghost! That's it exactly.

CECILE. What do you mean?

EILEEN and SEYMOUR at entrance.

TEVIS. That there is supposed to be a ghost in this house. (*As EILEEN and SEYMOUR enter.*) So—dress accordingly.

SEYMOUR. We're ready to mob you, Tevis. (*Joins them at center.*)

TEVIS. For what, I'd like to know.

SEYMOUR. For monopolizing your sister. What right has any brother to do a thing like that?

TEVIS. The best right in the world—hasn't he, Cecile?

CECILE. The best—and the first. (*Sentimentally.*) I'm very, very fond of my brother, Mr. Seymour.

SEYMOUR. Lucky dog that he is. I wish I had such a sister!

EILEEN (*who has perched on the arm of the chair right of doorway*). Perhaps Miss Tevis can be persuaded to enlarge her sphere of usefulness.

CECILE (*sweetly*). It is a temptation. (*To SEYMOUR.*) Did I do anything so dreadful as to cut a dance, Mr. Seymour?

SEYMOUR. Not with me. I'm coming for mine, right now—so there's no escape for you.

CECILE. Why should I wish to escape? (*Comes down left, followed by SEYMOUR.*)

Enter NATALIE and BLAIR from outdoors.

NATALIE. The highwayman is abroad again! (*Stands at TEVIS' left.*)

EILEEN (*to herself*). Oh! Oh! (*Rises.*)

SEYMOUR. How do you know?

NATALIE. Bess and Tom were the victims!

TEVIS. No!

NATALIE. Yes, they were—and after all their boasting. And everybody's joining in pursuit of the robber.

BLAIR. In fact, they've followed him up to this particular neighborhood—and here the trail disappears.

(*Joins TEVIS and NATALIE as EILEEN crosses back stage to right.*)

SEYMOUR. How did you hear about it?

NATALIE. Hear? The road is swarming with cars. I don't see how the fellow has escaped.

CECILE. Tell me about the highwayman.

SEYMOUR. A dashing knight of the road who appeared for the first time about three weeks ago—and whose identity is unknown.

CECILE. Unknown? Then I'll consult my crystal. (*Joins group at center.*)

NATALIE. *Your crystal?* Oh, Miss Tevis, is it possible that you are one of the wonderful creatures who can see past, present and future in a crystal ball?

CECILE (*laughing*). I'm not wonderful at all—and I don't profess to know anything of the real science of crystal gazing. But I have had results.

NATALIE. Then do you mind trying it—tonight—for us?

CECILE. *Mind?* It will be a real pleasure. Shall we experiment now—or later on?

SEYMOUR (*crossing and taking her arm*). Later on. Right now, we're all pursuing the highwayman. (*Laughingly, TEVIS, BLAIR, NATALIE, CECILE and SEYMOUR pass through the doorway. EILEEN lingers.*) Come on, Eileen.

EILEEN. I'm tired, Byrne—I'd rather rest.

SEYMOUR. See you later, then. (*Exeunt all.*)

EILEEN *hurries to the window and peers out anxiously. After a few moments, she beckons wildly and JERRY almost immediately clambers into the room over the sill.*

EILEEN (*pulling him down right stage*). Don't stand in the light—someone might see you. Oh, Jerry, Jerry, why did you do it—*why?*

JERRY. Great heavens! I never thought that you'd care about the horse; you told me to ride him whenever I wished.

EILEEN. Who cares about the horse? It's your deceit—your duplicity! Oh, Jerry, *Jerry!*

JERRY. Let me explain.

EILEEN. There's no time to explain. They're after you—don't you understand—they're after you.

JERRY. But—listen to me.

EILEEN. I won't listen—I must hide you—but where—*where?* (*Suddenly.*) The room—the room! (*Pushes him to the door of the room which contains the safe and takes key from behind the tapestry.*) In here!

JERRY. But, Eileen—I—

EILEEN (*pushing him inside the door*). You're safe here, for the present. And as soon as I can, I'll come

back to let you out. (*Slams door, locks it and returns key to hiding place.*)

NATALIE, BOBBY and TEVIS enter. CECILE and SEYMOUR stand at the doorway, chatting.

EILEEN (*defiantly*). Well—did you get him?

TEVIS. Not yet—but soon. The man is as good as caught.

EILEEN. Oh—is he? (*Flaunts angrily out the dining room door.*)

NATALIE (*at center*). I don't know what can be the matter with Eileen. She is so irritable—and impudent. (*Turns to BOBBY, who has followed her.*) Now, Bobby—go to bed. I can't be bothered with you any longer. (*TEVIS walks up and down back stage.*)

BOBBY. But, mother—you said I could stay up late.

NATALIE. I didn't mean all night. (*Impatiently.*) Now, run along.

BOBBY. I don't want to go—alone.

NATALIE. And you a big ten year old boy.

BOBBY (*pulling her*). Just this once. Please come with me, mother.

NATALIE (*pushing him away*). Bobby, I shall not speak to you again. Now, hurry. (*BOBBY goes upstairs slowly and reluctantly.*)

CECILE (*to SEYMOUR*). Then will you wait for me in the other room? It will take but a few moments to find my crystal—and—(*turns*). You still wish me to test its powers, Mrs. Deering?

NATALIE. By all means. Crystal gazing has a perfect fascination for me.

CECILE. Then I'll hurry. (*SEYMOUR goes out dining room door and CECILE runs quickly up the stairs.* NATALIE seats herself by table.)

TEVIS (*standing back of her*). Do you realize,

Natalie, that this is the first time this evening when I have had you—alone?

NATALIE. I haven't been realizing anything else, Alfred.

TEVIS. I wish that I might believe that.

NATALIE. And—why not?

TEVIS. Because I dare not reach for the moon.

NATALIE (*softly*). Nothing venture—nothing have.

TEVIS. Do you mean that?

NATALIE (*rising*). Can't you see—that I mean it?

TEVIS. Then—may I play highwayman—and ask for your heart?

NATALIE (*covily*). Why ask for what you already have?

TEVIS. *Natalie!* (*As he draws her to him.*) The real highwayman is a poor unlucky chap compared to me. (*After a moment.*) *What was that?*

NATALIE. I heard nothing.

TEVIS. A sound on the gravel outside the window. I wonder if that fellow is prowling about. (*Goes to window and peers out.*)

NATALIE. The highwayman?

TEVIS (*suddenly turning*). Natalie, is there anything of value in this room?

NATALIE (*frightened*). The safe—(*points*)—in there!

TEVIS. Can he open the door of the room?

NATALIE. Not without the key.

TEVIS. Then—*has* he the key?

NATALIE (*running to the tapestry and raising the corner as Tevis apparently gazes out the window.*). Oh, it's here, Alfred. It's here—safe!

TEVIS (*still peering out the window*). I'm glad of that. (*Turns.*) After all, it seems to have been a false

alarm. I'm sorry to have frightened you, dear. (Places an arm around her and they walk slowly down stage.)

CECILE appears on the stairway, with crystal.

CECILE. I'm afraid I'm interrupting. (As NATALIE and TEVIS separate.) In fact, I'm quite sure that you haven't finished your conversation.

TEVIS. All's well that ends well! Come along. (CECILE stands between them.)

NATALIE (in confusion). And is this the crystal? And do you hold it—so? (Takes crystal.) And—(as MARION and BLAIR enter from dining room.) Come, Marion—come, Mr. Blair—and have a peep at the future. (As they join her and CECILE at center). And will you tell the others to join us, Alfred?

TEVIS. Certainly. (Goes out dining room door.)

BLAIR. Just how do you explain this phenomenon, Miss Tevis?

CECILE (as she takes the crystal). I don't pretend to explain—save that I feel a force beyond me operating through me—sometimes a rarefied self, sometimes an extraneous personality. (MARION moves to right of stage.)

NATALIE. How perfectly wonderful! You should do it in public.

CECILE. My gift is not to be commercialized.

Enter TEVIS from dining room with MRS. DEERING, followed by SEYMORE and EILEEN. BLAIR crosses to MARION. As the newcomers crowd around CECILE and NATALIE, examining the crystal, BLAIR speaks to MARION in a low tone.

BLAIR. Marion, may I presume to offer you a word of warning?

MARION. Warning?

BLAIR. I am not at liberty to answer any questions

—and my suspicions may be unfounded. Accordingly, you will be forced to take much for granted.

MARION. Say whatever you wish, Sheridan.

BLAIR. Then may I ask you to be watchful—tonight—after everyone has retired? And if there is need of me—I shall be near.

MARION. I shall do as you say—and, thank you.

CECILE (*advancing with the crystal*). Now where shall I sit? Here in your midst? And may I have a small table for the ball? (*As SEYMOUR takes small table from right of doorway and places it before her.*) Thank you. (*He draws out telephone chair for her.*) Now, I am ready. (*Sits.*)

(MARION sits by table with BLAIR standing at her right. SEYMOUR is down left stage. NATALIE stands back of CECILE—to her left are MRS. DEERING and EILEEN.)

CECILE. May the lights be extinguished or at least very much dimmed? I find that my vision is very much keener and clearer and my perception of detail much more delicate if I am not enveloped in a glaring illumination. (*SEYMOUR touches electric button and the lights are extinguished enough to leave only a shaft of radiance for CECILE as she gazes at the crystal. The others are but faintly outlined.* TEVIS moves to vicinity of tapestry.) I shall ask you all to be very quiet and very sympathetic so that I may obtain the best results. (*For a time, amid perfect quiet, she gazes fixedly at the crystal—then finally speaks in a strained, unnatural tone.*) This home has not always been the center of joyous association, happy companionship and tender romance; it has not always re-echoed to the merry laugh of childhood; it has not always heard the soothing song of the wind in the tall trees. It has sheltered sorrow,

tragedy, even treachery; it has been shadowed by the curse of an enemy country; it has seen within its corridors a white-robed, blood-stained, wraithlike creature —(*stops with shuddering, moaning cry*). *Oh! Oh!* (*TEVIS, who in the meantime has possessed himself of the key, springs to her side*.)

TEVIS. *Cecile! Cecile!* What is it? (*He slips the key into her open hand*.)

CECILE (*shaking him off impatiently and dropping the key into her gown*). The scene brightens; there is a garden of roses; a scented lilac bush which taps the pane; and along the winding way comes one for whom the sunlight of love and happiness is once more shining. (*Pauses*.) There is a stranger—a neighbor—who wears the guise of friendship but whose heart is dark with disloyalty. I cannot see his face, but he has won his way to the confidence of those whose circle has opened to receive him. (*Bends closer*.) And yet—and yet— (*Another pause*.) The cloud has lifted—his face is in the sunshine—and I see him clearly. (*Suddenly raises her head, rises, turns and looks directly at BLAIR as SEYMOUR pushes the button and the room is flooded with light*.) He—is—in>this—room!

CURTAIN.

(*The curtain is lowered for a moment to indicate a passage of time*.)

The curtain rises on a dark stage. Down the stairway creeps EILEEN. She runs to the tapestry, raises it and for a moment stands bewildered. Then she hurries to the door of the little room and shakes it once, twice, thrice, as she whispers “Jerry—Jerry!” Excitedly, she runs down left of stage and stands irresolute. As she turns, a figure, white-robed, whose face

is hidden by a floating cloudlike veil, comes slowly and noiselessly down the stairway. EILEEN gazes for a moment, then turns in fright and hurries through the dining room door. The figure glides to the door and as she places the key in the keyhole, MARION appears on the stairway. She watches the figure until it disappears within the open door.

CURTAIN.

OUT OF THE STILLNESS

THE THIRD ACT.

SCENE: Same as the Second Act. The curtain rises upon EILEEN curled up on the window seat. After a moment, LUCY enters from doorway to dining room with a card table which she places at lower left of stage. On this she arranges a cover, and takes cards, scores, pencils, etc., from table drawer.

EILEEN. *Lucy?*

LUCY (*who has not seen her*). Good gracious, Miss Eileen! How you startled me!

EILEEN (*petulantly*). What are you doing?

LUCY. What do I usually do after breakfast?

EILEEN. *Breakfast?* Is it breakfast time?

LUCY. It's later than usual, of course—but it's breakfast. (*Suddenly.*) Haven't you had any?

EILEEN. *Had any?* I never want to look upon food again.

LUCY. Then something dreadful must have happened to you.

EILEEN. Who's in the dining room?

LUCY. Mrs. Deering, Miss Marion, Mr. Seymour and your mother.

EILEEN. Where are the others?

LUCY. Miss Lizzie finished long ago.

EILEEN. Probably ready for lunch by this time.

LUCY. Miss Tevis had a tray sent to her room.

EILEEN. She's that kind.

LUCY. And Mr. Tevis is walking up and down outside, smoking like a locomotive.

EILEEN (*abruptly*). Where's Jerry?

LUCY. He hasn't been near me this morning.

EILEEN (*sharply*). Why should he be near you? (*Pauses as LUCY glances at her in surprise.*) Where's the morning paper?

LUCY. Mr. Tevis has it.

EILEEN (*rising*). Then get it—*get it*—right away, *right away*, I say. (*Stamps.*) Don't stand there staring at me, Lucy!

LUCY (*going to doorway*). Whatever in the world has made you so fidgety and so touchy, Miss Eileen? (*Passes out.*)

EILEEN, *left to herself, takes the key from behind the tapestry, opens door to the little room, and disappears. In a moment she returns, locks the door, replaces the key and walks nervously up and down. Enter LUCY slowly, reading the open paper.*

LUCY (*as she reads*). Oh—oh—oh!

EILEEN. What's the matter? (*Stands by table.*)

LUCY. He's been caught.

EILEEN. Who's been caught?

LUCY. The highwayman. Last night—(*pauses*)—and he was shot while trying to escape.

(EILEEN stands motionless for a moment, then crumples up on the nearby chair and hides her head in her arms. LUCY drops the paper, runs to her and kneels by the chair.)

LUCY. What is the matter? Oh, what is the matter?

MARION and SEYMOUR *emerge from the dining room. MARION carries a pair of large garden shears.*

MARION. Then if you have nothing special to do, help me gather flowers. It's my particular morning task—and—

LUCY. Miss Marion! Oh, Miss Marion!

MARION. Eileen—what is the trouble? (*Hands shears to SEYMORE.*) Will you bring the flowers—here—to me, Byrne?

SEYMORE (*glancing at EILEEN*). But if there is anything I can do—

MARION. There isn't. Probably a case of overwrought nerves. Come back with the flowers later on.

SEYMORE. Just as you say. (*Goes outdoors.*)

MARION. Mrs. Deering needs you in the other room, Lucy. I'll attend to Miss Eileen.

LUCY. Yes, Miss Marion. (*Goes out at dining room door.*)

MARION (*sitting on arm of EILEEN's chair*). Now, suppose you tell me all about it.

EILEEN. There's nothing to tell.

MARION. I fancy there is.

EILEEN. I'm just tired—and cross—

MARION. And tangled up in a web of deception.

EILEEN. What do you mean?

MARION. You have known all along that Jerry was never Bess Roberts' chauffeur, haven't you?

EILEEN. Yes.

MARION. And you've also known that Jerry is the highwayman.

EILEEN. What makes you think he's the highwayman?

MARION. Isn't the limp a bit suspicious? And the fact that, last night, he was abroad on your horse at the very time of the hold-up?

EILEEN. That's no proof.

MARION. Perhaps not. (*Pauses.*) I am waiting for you to explain—everything.

EILEEN. I'm so miserable—that I'll have to tell somebody.

MARION. Then—from the first.

EILEEN. He came—that afternoon after Aunt Lizzie told us. I knew who it was by her description—and I engaged him as chauffeur.

MARION. A very impulsive and dangerous thing to do.

EILEEN. But I wanted to reform him, Marion.

MARION (*impatiently*). Oh, Eileen, you are such a mixture of impetuosity and indiscretion!

EILEEN (*sobbing*). And I didn't reform him, after all. (*Points to paper.*)

MARION (*as she picks up the paper and reads*). I'm sorry. But it should teach you a lesson. That type of criminal is dangerous, no matter how attractive and reserved he may be.

EILEEN. Jerry wasn't exactly—reserved.

MARION. I imagine not. It makes me sick, Eileen, to think that you had anything to do with him—that you even spoke to him. And the fact that he took advantage of your ridiculous reform proves what he is.

EILEEN (*angrily*). Jerry's a gentleman—a gentleman!

MARION. He couldn't be.

EILEEN. And—oh, Marion—Marion—I'm dreadfully fond of him!

MARION. *Eileen!*

EILEEN (*wildly*). I tried to save him last night when I heard of the hold-up. I shut him in—there! (*Points.*)

MARION. In—that—room?

EILEEN. Why not? (*Rises.*) It's the safest place.

MARION. Then you let him out later?

EILEEN. I tried to—but the key was gone.

MARION. *Gone?* (*Rises.*)

EILEEN. I almost lost my mind. I shook the door

—and called him—but he didn’t answer. And then—
(pauses).

MARION (*eagerly*). Yes?

EILEEN. I saw the ghost.

MARION. The *ghost*?

EILEEN. You think I’m crazy.

MARION. No, I don’t.

EILEEN. It came down the stairway all in white—with a floating white veil. What was it, Marion—what was it?

MARION. Someone walking in her sleep, of course. Where did it go?

EILEEN. I didn’t wait to see. I ran out of that door (*points to dining room door*) and up the back stairs.

MARION. Did you come down again?

EILEEN. Early this morning. The key was in its usual place.

MARION. Probably mother had kept it during the night.

EILEEN. And had returned it before daybreak? Hardly? (Pauses.) It’s queer—isn’t it, Marion?

MARION. Very—queer.

EILEEN. And how did he get out?

MARION. Someone opened the door, of course.

EILEEN. But who could have opened it?

MARION. That I don’t know.

EILEEN (*taking the paper*). He was—captured—shortly after midnight.

MARION (*taking it from her*). Never mind about that—but rest for a while. Things will appear different later on.

EILEEN. But Jerry in that jail—and—

MARION (*with arm about her shoulder*). Don’t think about Jerry.

EILEEN. I can't help it.

MARION. Then we shall try to help him in some way.

EILEEN. Really?

MARION. Really. (EILEEN goes slowly upstairs as SEYMOUR enters.)

SEYMOUR (with a glance at EILEEN). Is the patient recovering?

MARION. Hardly a patient, Byrne. Eileen has been overdoing and her nerves are a trifle shaky. That's all. (As she takes the flowers which he carries.) Oh—how pretty! I hereby appoint you chief floral decorator. (Arranges the flowers in vase on table.)

SEYMOUR. When do you expect Jane?

MARION. On the noon train. Don't you want to meet her?

SEYMOUR. Rather. Shall I take the car?

MARION. I fear you must act as temporary chauffeur. Jerry has vanished.

SEYMOUR. Vanished?

MARION. From our particular circle. (Pauses.) I have every reason to believe that Jerry is the highwayman.

SEYMOUR. Great Scott! And Eileen—

MARION. Is naturally a bit hysterical. To discover that the chauffeur one engages is a criminal is a bit disconcerting.

SEYMOUR. And she wanted a criminal to reform! I begin to understand.

MARION. Never mind about that. We have no complaint to make since he has not pointed his pistol at us—collectively or individually.

SEYMOUR. You forget Aunt Lizzie.

MARION (laughing). I do, indeed.

SEYMOUR. Isn't it strange that she has not recognized him?

MARION. The handkerchief over his face probably saved him. And she *has* had suspicions.

SEYMORE (*after a pause*). Marion, has it occurred to you that strange things are happening?

MARION. Strange things *are* happening. (*Pauses.*) What did you think of the crystal gazing?

SEYMORE. A pretty piece of acting, but rather unfair to Blair.

MARION. Why—unfair?

SEYMORE. One knows—intuitively—that he is not that sort.

MARION. *You* know and *I* know, but the others undoubtedly look upon him with suspicion.

SEYMORE. She apologized gracefully after it was all over and assured him that there was some mistake—but the mischief was done.

MARION. And was there a purpose back of it all? (*Comes to him at center.*) Listen, Byrne. •

As they talk quietly and earnestly together JANE appears at doorway. For a moment she watches them wistfully, then starts toward them.

JANE. Enter—the heavy villain!

MARION (*meeting her*). Jane, I didn't expect you until noon.

JANE. My nice literary man brought me all the way in his limousine and dropped me bag and baggage at your doorstep.

MARION. Was the conference satisfactory?

JANE. Oh—very.

MARION (*taking her traveling bag*). Then, come upstairs and tell me all about it while you rest. Byrne will excuse us.

JANE. But I'm not tired—and I must tell you both

what has happened; for it is all so wonderful that I can't quite believe it's true. (*Sits right of doorway.*)

MARION (*sitting on hassock*). Is the nice literary man responsible for all this good fortune? (**SEYMOUR** *sits by table.*)

JANE. He is. For playing the part of the good magician he has been instrumental in securing for me the Lyon Fellowship.

MARION. And what is the Lyon Fellowship?

JANE. The goal of every art student. It means five years at Paris, five years of the best instruction, five years of everything worth while—

MARION. And five years away from us all. Have you accepted, Jane?

JANE. I am to answer tomorrow. (*Pauses.*) But I shall accept, for it means the golden opportunity come my way at last.

SEYMOUR (*rising*). You shall not go, Jane. (*Goes to her.*) *You shall not go!*

MARION (*rising hastily*). Then persuade her to stay, Byrne. And if your argument fails, perhaps mine will have some weight. (*Goes upstairs with JANE's bag.*)

JANE (*rising*). And why, Byrne, do you say that I shall not go? As an artist you know what the fellowship means; you realize that it will almost certainly result in my definite career. (*Comes down stage.*)

SEYMOUR. But, Jane—I need you.

JANE (*after a pause*). Is that a reason great enough to stand in the way of my ambition? (*Crosses to table.*)

SEYMOUR (*standing at her left*). You don't understand.

JANE. I think I do. (*Sits.*)

SEYMOUR. For I, myself, didn't understand until

just now—when I realized the possibility of losing you. (Pauses.) Don't go, Jane. (Sits on arm of the chair.)

JANE. You're asking a great deal of me, Byrne.

SEYMOUR. I've always asked a great deal of you—your help, your encouragement, your friendship, your care—(pauses). Is it too late to ask the greatest thing of all?

JANE. Meaning—my ambition?

SEYMOUR. Meaning—your love. For I know, now, that—always there has been no one but you.

JANE. That's foolish, Byrne. Just because I'm about to disappear from your immediate circle you fancy that whatever brotherly affection you have for me is, in reality, something else.

SEYMOUR (crossing to left). You don't believe me.

JANE. Don't put it that way. Rather, that I know you are mistaken.

SEYMOUR. But I'm not mistaken—and you're going to listen to me, Jane.

JANE. But I'm not going to listen. (Abruptly.) What about Marion?

SEYMOUR. Marion? Never. You couldn't have loved me or you would never have sent me to her.

JANE. I've loved you always, Byrne—you see, I'm quite frank about it. And loving you, I thought only of your happiness, your career—and that Marion could give you what you need—and want.

SEYMOUR. But I want—only you.

JANE. And I have only myself to give.

SEYMOUR (as he starts toward her). Then—

JANE (raising her hand). Stop. For, even if we grant all that, there is still an unsurmountable barrier between us.

SEYMOUR. What possible barrier could there be?

JANE (*rising*). The barrier of our careers. (*As he attempts to speak.*) Oh, I know what you're about to say—how you're trying to tell me that—together—we'll accomplish wonders; but we couldn't—and we shouldn't—for the personal freedom of it all would be gone—and there might even be a petty jealousy of each other's work—

SEYMOUR. *Jane—*

MARION *comes slowly down the stairway.*

JANE. Oh, no, Byrne, we're much better off as we are. You are destined for great things and, as for me—who knows what is waiting in the enchanted land across the sea!

MARION (*coming down center*). But suppose that it doesn't prove the enchanted land—and that you discover too late that the haven of heart's desire is—behind you. (*Slips an arm around JANE's waist and puts her hand through BYRNE's arm as she guides them to the open doorway.*) It's too big a question to settle all in a moment, dear Jane; and it's only fair to talk it over with Byrne—out there. (*As she pushes BYRNE ahead.*) Wait for her—there. (*He goes out doorway.*) Jane, the love that has lain dormant for years will be all the truer and stronger for the awakening; and even Fame's beckoning finger can lead you to nothing greater. (*Pauses.*) Will you go—or stay?

JANE (*quietly*). Deep in my heart, Marion, I feel that I shall—stay. (*She follows SEYMOUR.*)

(*For a moment MARION stands looking after her, then hurries to the telephone.*)

MARION (*at telephone*). Oakland 74. . . . Yes, please. . . . May I speak to Mr. Blair? . . . Gone? . . . Where? . . . Oh—he didn't say.

(Hangs up receiver with a bewildered expression and crosses to table.)

From the doorway comes BOBBY in military attire. He marches up to MARION, who quickly regains her composure and returns his salute.

MARION. Greetings, General Deering—and what can you tell me of the latest military maneuvers?

BOBBY (motioning to his imaginary soldiers). Here's my crack regiment all ready to show you, Aunt Marion, if you have time to look.

MARION (sitting by table). I always have time for you, General—so trot out your rookies.

For a few moments BOBBY conducts a military drill, giving and executing his commands. MARION, in spite of her pretended interest, is preoccupied.

BOBBY. I don't believe you know what we're doing, Aunt Marion. You're thinking of something else.

MARION. Grown-ups can know just what's going on even if their thoughts do happen to be a thousand miles away.

BOBBY. I hope Mr. Blair isn't going to be a thousand miles away.

MARION. What makes you think of Mr. Blair?

BOBBY. Because I saw him drive away long before I was dressed this morning—and he put a suit case in the car. (After a moment.) Aunt Marion?

MARION. Yes?

BOBBY. He wouldn't break his word to me, would he?

MARION. I'm sure he wouldn't.

BOBBY. For—you know—he promised to take me fishing tomorrow.

MARION. Then I'm sure he'll be back in time.

BOBBY. Didn't he say anything about going away?

MARION. Not a word.

BOBBY. That's funny, isn't it?

MARION. Decidedly funny.

BOBBY (*catching her by the hand*). Come on outdoors. I don't want to stay in this poky old place. (*She rises.*)

And just then, HENRY JEROME, a flushed and overheated gentleman, appears at the doorway, agitatedly mopping his brow. He is middle-aged and prosperous—and a twinkle in his eye proclaims a sense of humor.

JEROME. I beg your pardon for appearing in this unceremonious fashion, but your gardener told me that I would find a telephone in this room.

MARION (*pointing*). Right there. And at your service.

JEROME. I am the owner of the house next to the Stuyvesants and arrived this morning, never expecting to find my own telephone out of commission. Which, I trust, explains everything.

MARION. It does. We'll leave you in full possession. (*With BOBBY she goes outdoors.*)

JEROME is about to place the receiver to his ear when AUNT LIZZIE majestically descends the stairs.

JEROME (*as he first sees her*). God bless my soul, if it isn't Lizzie. (*Puts down telephone.*)

AUNT L. Still appearing when you are least expected, aren't you, Henry?

JEROME (*meeting her at center*). That's a pretty welcome for a man you haven't seen for twenty-five years.

AUNT L. Any man who deliberately stays away from his friends for twenty-five years doesn't deserve any welcome at all.

JEROME. That old tongue of yours is still doing duty, I see.

AUNT L. To the extent that it has saved me from any matrimonial entanglement. (*Crosses to table.*)

JEROME. Why, isn't this your house?

AUNT L. My sister-in-law's. And why, may I ask, are you staging the return of the prodigal son in our front hall? (*Sits.*)

JEROME. My own home is two doors up the road. I've just bought it. (*Takes chair from back stage and places it at her left.*)

AUNT L. For the sake of old associations, I presume.

JEROME. Exactly. When I took possession I found the telephone disconnected—and, on the advice of your gardener—

AUNT L. Came over to use ours. Well—why don't you use it?

JEROME. The excitement of once more beholding you, Lizzie, has driven common, everyday duties from my mind.

AUNT L. Don't try to be funny, Henry. You never could do it when you were a boy—and I fancy you make more of a failure now that you've reached the years of discretion. (*Pauses.*) Where is your family?

JEROME. I'm looking for it.

AUNT L. *It?*

JEROME. My son, Donald. He's all I have. My wife died ten years ago, Lizzie.

AUNT L. I hadn't heard of it, Henry. But in all these years we've known nothing of you save that you were far away in another part of the country busily engaged in making money.

JEROME. That's been my chief interest—that and my boy. And now I'm coming back—to stay.

AUNT L. But what's become of the boy?

JEROME. That I don't know. Three weeks ago I sent him ahead to get the place in order, as I was delayed by business. Today I find that there are no servants, no telephone connections and—no Donald.

AUNT L. Haven't you heard from him?

JEROME. Several scrappy letters, raving about the house and the surrounding country. He's been here, all right.

AUNT L. Aren't you worried?

JEROME. Not a bit. I have great faith in his ability to take care of himself. Don's always doing erratic things—and loves the adventurous.

AUNT L. Quite a change from you, Henry. If I remember correctly, you never ventured beyond your front gate without your rubbers.

JEROME. You weren't so recklessly dashing yourself.

AUNT L. (*scorning the remark*). The boy probably has some nearby sweetheart in whom he is interested.

JEROME. Oh, no, he hasn't. Don shares all his secrets with his old dad. (*Complacently*.) He's a great boy, Lizzie, a great boy.

AUNT L. Spoiled to death, probably. You are a poor excuse for a disciplinarian.

JEROME. Don never needed discipline. He's been the best sort of a son—he's stood for good manly things. (*Pauses*.) He's a great boy, Lizzie—a great boy.

AUNT L. (*sarcastically*). He sounds like a paragon.

JEROME. And when he came back from France—wounded—with a Croix de Guerre and a D. S. M.—well—I just can't explain, Lizzie—but I was pretty proud and pretty happy.

AUNT L. (*softly*). Why shouldn't you be—proud and happy?

JEROME (*triumphantly*). *There!* You're talking like the tender-hearted Lizzie I used to know—who always tried to disguise the tenderness by sharp words and clever sarcasm. (*Pauses.*) I've been wondering if that other self still existed.

AUNT L. It is strange that you recognized me after all these years.

JEROME. Not strange at all. For I've thought of you often—and you haven't changed—at least to me.

AUNT L. And I knew you the moment I saw you.

JEROME (*laughing*). Isn't it all like a story book? Here we sit—twenty-five years after—trying to make each other believe that time has touched us lightly.

AUNT L. (*testily*). Nothing of the kind. You know very well that I look my age—and I'm just beginning to feel that you are fast entering upon that epoch known as *dotage*.

JEROME. Oh, no, you're not, Lizzie—no, you're not. You're thinking, just as I am, of that long ago when youth meant friendship—and more—and when both lives were embittered by and changed by misunderstanding.

AUNT L. (*softly*). I still have the valentine, Henry. You remember?

JEROME. Yes.

AUNT L. (*testily*). Not, of course, that I believe in valentines—silly sentimental stuff as they are.

JEROME (*laughing*). Oh, yes, you do believe, Lizzie—yes, you do. And some day I'll send another valentine—if you'll let me.

AUNT L. Don't you think that you'd better attend to that telephoning?

JEROME (*rising, crossing the floor and limping a*

little). Ouch! A touch of rheumatism. Old age will out—won't it, Lizzie?

AUNT L. *Henry!*

JEROME. What's the matter?

AUNT L. *Does Donald limp?*

JEROME. A trifle. He was wounded in the knee.

AUNT L. And does he look like you?

JEROME. He looks as I did when you first knew me, Lizzie.

AUNT L. Then, Henry, leave that telephone—and come along with me. (*Takes his arm.*) For I think I can help you to find Donald.

JEROME (*as he is firmly guided to the open doorway*). But, Lizzie—you've never seen him—

AUNT L. Oh—yes—I have! (*They go out.*)

CECILE *comes slowly down the stairway—and after looking carefully around—goes to the window and signals.* Almost immediately, TEVIS *enters from outdoors.*

TEVIS. I've been walking up and down that yard for hours, waiting for your signal.

CECILE (*calmly*). I saw you. (*Sits by table.*)

TEVIS. *Saw me?* (*Angrily.*) Then why have you taken all this time to report?

CECILE. The hour was too early, my dear Alfred. You should know by this time that I allow nothing to interfere with my breakfast in bed—and my beauty sleep.

TEVIS. Don't exasperate me.

CECILE. And, anyway—there is nothing to report.

TEVIS (*coming to her*). What do you mean?

CECILE. Just what I say. There was no envelope behind the panel.

TEVIS. There must have been.

CECILE. I do not often make mistakes, Alfred.

TEVIS. You looked—thoroughly?

CECILE. Thoroughly. I repeat—there was no envelope. Either Von Holz was mistaken in regard to its location—or you have been tricked.

TEVIS. Blair has already found it.

CECILE (*indifferently*). That may be.

TEVIS. Were you detected?

CECILE. In this stupid household? Hardly. (*Rises and crosses to telephone chair.*) Let's get out of it, Alfred. (*Sits.*) I'm bored.

TEVIS (*at center*). We're forced to get out—now. Listen. Later on I'll appear with an unexpected letter summoning me to New York. I'll insist on your remaining—but like a dutiful sister you will desire to accompany me. So—be ready to start at a moment's notice.

CECILE. With all the pleasure in the world.

MRS. DEERING and NATALIE *enter from dining room.*

CECILE. Are you provoked with me, dear Mrs. Deering, for being such a lazy guest? (*Stands by MRS. DEERING as NATALIE crosses to TEVIS' right.*) The charming room, the delicious breeze and the heavenly quiet proved too much for me—so I deliberately overslept.

MRS. D. Every guest in this household does as she pleases, my dear.

CECILE. Then that is what makes it so irresistible. I wish I might always stay.

NATALIE. You'll be coming back often, I hope—for—for—(*hesitates*) Alfred, have you told her?

CECILE (*quickly*). Oh—*really*? I don't have to be told—it's so very evident—and how very wonderful! (*Crosses to NATALIE and kisses her.*) I am so happy, my dear. (*Turns.*) Alfred, why didn't you tell me?

TEVIS. I wasn't sure that Natalie wished the engagement made public yet.

MRS. D. Not yet. You see, I know all about it, too, and Natalie and I have been making our plans this morning. Can't we four celebrate the event at the bridge table? (To CECILE.) It is our custom, Miss Tevis, to enjoy a game each morning after our breakfast.

CECILE. How lovely! I adore bridge.

TEVIS. And I'll come in later on. I've a cigar to finish.

CECILE. You're afraid we intend to discuss the trousseau—now own up to it.

TEVIS (*as he goes out the doorway*). I refuse to commit myself.

MRS. DEERING *pushes telephone chair to left of card table and seats herself*. CECILE *places the chair near doorway to Mrs. Deering's right*. NATALIE *wheels chair right of table to Mrs. Deering's left*. MARION *passes the doorway*.

MRS. D. Marion will make the fourth. Won't you, Marion?

MARION (*entering*). Certainly. Whose partner shall I be? (As MRS. DEERING motions her to sit opposite her.) Yours, mother? (Brings small chair from back of table and places it opposite MRS. DEERING. They seat themselves, CECILE facing the audience and MARION at her right.) Good morning, Miss Tevis. Did you rest well?

CECILE (*effusively*). Wonderfully. This air is a tonic.

MARION. And, doubtless, exercise tends to invoke deep slumber.

CECILE. But I took no exercise.

MARION. Oh—I see.

CECILE. So the air is entirely responsible.

MRS. D. (*who has been looking at her cards*). I'll say—a diamond.

NATALIE. How opulent of you, mother.

CECILE. And how appropriate, Natalie, after what you've just told me. (*Pauses.*) I may call you Natalie now—may I not?

NATALIE. Of course you may—Cecile! (*As she glances at her cards.*) I'll leave the bid to you, Marion.

MARION. And I'll pass it on to Miss Tevis.

CECILE. Who makes it a heart—to match the diamond. (*Looks around.*) Isn't anyone to raise the bid? Then—a heart it is.

NATALIE (*as she lays down her cards*). It seems to me that hearts are rather in your line, Cecile.

CECILE (*gayly*). My chief commodity. Your lead, Mrs. Deering.

MRS. D. (*as she plays*). This seems a strange lead, doesn't it?

MARION. A knave? Oh, a knave often leads I'm finding out.

NATALIE (*as she plays*). I'll give him my two spot.

MARION (*as she plays*). And I'll present him with a queen for a running mate.

NATALIE. What a queer play, Marion.

MARION. Queer but symbolical. That's why I did it.

CECILE (*laughingly*). And all your trouble for nothing. Watch me take it with a heart.

MARION. Though a club would have been more appropriate. (*As EILEEN comes down the stairway.*) Come here, Eileen, and tell what you saw last night.

EILEEN (*standing back of MARION's chair*). Every body would laugh at me.

MARION. I don't believe so. Out with it.

EILEEN (*dramatically*). I—saw—a—ghost!

CECILE. Ghost! (*Drops her cards*). How stupid of me!

MRS. D. Ghost! Impossible.

NATALIE. *Where?*

EILEEN. Right on those stairs. It was after all of you had gone to bed. And it wore white and had a long, floating veil.

MRS. D. What were you doing down stairs at that time of night?

EILEEN. I came down to get something I had forgotten.

MRS. D. (*sharply*). And doubtless were too sleepy to know what you were doing.

MARION. Don't condemn Eileen too hastily, mother, for I—took—saw the ghost.

NATALIE (*for the card game has gone on during all the conversation*). Cecile! You've trumped my ace!

CECILE (*confusedly*). My dear! I beg your pardon.

EILEEN. You saw it, Marion? You didn't say so.

MARION. For reasons of my own.

MRS. D. (*laying down her cards*). You make me nervous, Marion. Is this simply to frighten us or is it a fact?

MARION. It's a fact. It passed me near enough—to touch—and (*significantly*). Its veil was thrown back!

NATALIE. Why, Cecile! You're positively white!

MRS. D. How ridiculous of us even to listen. Marion, of course, saw one of the maids walking in her sleep.

MARION. I'm not attempting to explain.

TEVIS *enters hurriedly from outdoors with open letter.*

NATALIE. Here's Alfred. (*As she notes his disturbed expression she rises and goes to him.*) What is it?

TEVIS. Bad news, I'm afraid.

MRS. D. *Bad news?*

TEVIS. In that I am called to New York immediately. This letter has just come and (*to CECILE*) it concerns some investments, Cecile.

CECILE. Oh, Alfred—nothing serious, I hope.

TEVIS. I can't tell until I'm on the ground. But that need not curtail your visit.

CECILE. Really? Oh, I do want to stay! Yet it seems selfish.

TEVIS. Not selfish at all. (*Crosses to MRS. DEERING.*) I'm sorry to rush away so unceremoniously but the demand is urgent.

MRS. D. Are you going immediately?

TEVIS. On the first train to the city.

MRS. D. If that provoking Jerry had not disappeared, I could send you in the car.

TEVIS. Quite unnecessary, my dear Mrs. Deering. I have trespassed upon your charming hospitality as it is.

NATALIE. I'll drive you to the train myself. Oh, Alfred, must you go?

TEVIS. I must. (*Softly to her.*) But only for a little while.

CECILE (*rising*). How very inconsiderate of me to think of staying, Alfred—when you have all that business worry ahead of you. I'll go too.

TEVIS. Indeed you won't.

CECILE. Indeed I shall.

NATALIE. Then I'll help you pack your suitcase.

CECILE. It's practically packed—and I can throw a long coat over this gown. Please don't come, Natalie, for I can manage beautifully.

TEVIS. I don't want to spoil your visit, Cecile.

CECILE. And I don't want you to go alone. So it isn't worth arguing. You'll excuse me? (*Starts up stairway followed by NATALIE.*)

TEVIS. And me? If you can excuse such an abrupt departure.

MRS. D. (*rising*). I'm sorry, of course, but business demands are inexorable.

(*As TEVIS goes upstairs, MARION returns chairs to original positions save that back stage which is near center. EILEEN crosses to back of table and stands against it.*)

MARION (*returning down right*). Well—what do you think of it?

MRS. D. *Think of it? What is there to think?*

LUCY *comes from dining room and removes card table. And suddenly BLAIR appears at doorway.*

BLAIR. Good morning! (*To which MRS. DEERING responds with a curt nod and seats herself in the telephone chair.*)

MARION (*as BLAIR crosses to her*). And so you didn't go away after all! Bobby saw you deposit a suitcase in the car and drew his own conclusions.

BLAIR. Tell Bobby that he guessed too soon. The suitcase was being sent back to its owner and the supposed journey ended in a nearby town where I met a friend who returned with me.

MARION. Verdict—not guilty. (*Sits right of table.*) Won't you be seated? (*Motions to chair near center.*) We are a bit disorganized at present by the sudden departure of Mr. Tevis and his sister.

BLAIR (*anxiously*). Have they gone?

MARION. They're going in a very few minutes.

BLAIR (*sitting at center*). Then I must come to the point quickly—for this is no social visit. For a few

moments, Mrs. Deering, I crave your indulgence, although I realize that after last night any confidence which you have had in me must have been sadly shaken.

MRS. D. (*with dignity*). I am very glad to hear anything you may have to say, Mr. Blair.

BLAIR. Thank you. I shall be brief. (*After a moment.*) When Von Holz hurriedly departed, Mrs. Deering, he left somewhere in this house an envelope which contains information of value to the United States.

MARION. How do you know all this, Sheridan?

BLAIR. Because I am a close friend of Hamilton Whitney, who is at the head of secret service. When he heard of my renting the next door house, he asked me—to watch.

MRS. D. Watch—whom?

BLAIR. One of your guests.

MRS. D. And why one of my guests?

BLAIR. Because this particular guest had been suspected of former affiliation with Germany—and it was surmised that he would be sent on this mission.

MRS. D. I resent your interference.

BLAIR. It is not a personal interference, my dear lady; it is a request of the Government.

MARION. How did Mr. Whitney learn of the envelope?

BLAIR. That of course I do not know. My part was to keep a certain person under surveillance and to discover, if possible, the key to the hiding place.

MRS. D. Which you were to use? (*Very sarcastically.*)

BLAIR. If necessary. Though that particular exploit was preferably reserved for the other fellow.

MARION. Well—what have you found out?

BLAIR. Enough to justify a telegram to Whitney last night.

MARION. But if you know he is guilty why not arrest at once?

BLAIR. You must remember that, as yet, his guilt is only a surmise.

MARION. Then why the telegram?

BLAIR. Because the arrival of a confederate made me think that some definite action was to be taken immediately. Later—I was sure of my suspicion.

MARION. Why?

BLAIR. Because I saw the key taken from behind the tapestry and slipped to the confederate.

MRS. D. (*angrily*). Mr. Blair, we are quite justified in believing what we heard last evening. You have proved—an enemy.

BLAIR (*rising*). Rather—a protector. (*Stands at right of center.*)

MRS. D. (*rising*). And against which one of my guests do you make this absurd accusation? (MARION *rises and stands at lower right*. EILEEN *joins her*.)

BLAIR (*glancing at TEVIS and CECILE who, with NATALIE, are descending the stairs.*) The question is answered.

CECILE (*at center*). Mr. Blair! And why this early morning call? (NATALIE *comes a little right of center and TEVIS stands at CECILE's left.*)

BLAIR. Perhaps—to tell you goodbye. (*To TEVIS.*) Tevis, may I see you for a few moments?

TEVIS. Sorry—but I've no time to spare.

BLAIR. Then perhaps my friend may persuade you to linger. (*Calls.*) Whitney?

From outdoors comes WHITNEY, determined, brusque and right to the point.

BLAIR. May I present Mr. Whitney to you all?

(WHITNEY *bows to* MRS. DEERING.) Tevis, I fancy, needs no introduction.

WHITNEY. Hardly.

TEVIS. I fear there is some mistake. Mr. Whitney has the advantage of me.

WHITNEY (*at Tevis' left*). Drop the pose, Tevis. You know who I am.

TEVIS (*indifferently*). The matter is not worth an argument. (*Crosses to Mrs. Deering*.) Goodbye, Mrs. Deering. I'm sorry for the hurried departure.

WHITNEY. Why hurry, Tevis? Only say the word and I shall be glad to act as your messenger. The War Department has waited a long time for that particular envelope.

TEVIS. Really, Mrs. Deering, I am at a loss to know why this fellow insists on annoying me. Can you explain?

WHITNEY (*coming down center and standing at Tevis' right*). Let me do the explaining—for doubtless your hostess will be enlightened. (*To Mrs. Deering*.) Mrs. Deering, if you are to know this man in his true character, you must be made aware of a few facts concerning him. To the secret service department, Alfred Tevis is always just within the law—skilful enough to escape its meshes, daring enough to go the limit. We knew that—during the war—he was an agent of Germany; we know that in many ways he has betrayed his country—for he *is* an American—but we have never yet been able to prove our suspicions and to apprehend him in the very act.

NATALIE (*coming between WHITNEY and TEVIS*). Stop! How dare you! Mr. Tevis is my fiancé.

WHITNEY. I fear not. (*Glancing at CECILE*.) His present companion is—and has been—for some time—his wife.

NATALIE (*glancing at CECILE who smiles insolently and crosses from left of stage between WHITNEY and NATALIE.*) *His wife!*

WHITNEY. And a clever one. I take this opportunity of paying my tribute to her quick wit, her wily stratagems and her never-failing charm. Like her husband—she is always within the law. (*NATALIE gropes her way to MRS. DEERING and stands by her, hiding her face on her shoulder.*)

TEVIS. I've had enough of this. (*Starts to leave the room.*)

WHITNEY. Watch out, Tevis—the game is up. Schauff has double-crossed you.

TEVIS (*off his guard*). *What?*

WHITNEY. He sold his secret to us three weeks ago.

TEVIS. And implicated me?

WHITNEY. Not at all. Your name was not mentioned. When we heard that you were a guest in the very house of the secret, we naturally had our suspicions. Blair did the rest for us.

CECILE. How very interesting—and amusing! But—this time Mr. Whitney—we are not the culprits.

MARION. May I say a word, Mr. Whitney?

WHITNEY. Certainly.

MARION. I regret to act in what seems an inhospitable way, but loyalty to my own government forces me to state that—last night—I, myself, saw Miss Tevis open the door of the secret room—and enter it.

CECILE. Ridiculous!

MARION. Not at all. Merely true.

CECILE. I must have been walking in my sleep.

MARION. I think not.

CECILE. And how could I gain possession of the key?

BLAIR. It was slipped to you during the crystal reading.

WHITNEY. So you see, the case is quite proved. Accordingly, hand over the envelope.

CECILE. But there is no envelope.

WHITNEY. My dear Mrs. Tevis, you can't expect us to believe that.

CECILE. Believe it or not—just as you choose. The fact remains that we have been the victims of a trick.

TEVIS. *Cecile!*

CECILE. Why attempt the impossible, Alfred? Own up—for even if you hadn't given yourself away, the evidence is against us.

TEVIS (*defiantly to WHITNEY*). Then—what are you going to do about it?

And JERRY—resplendent in summer flannels—appears at the doorway.

EILEEN (*as she spies him*). Jerry! Jerry! (*Starts to him.*)

MARION (*holding her back*). Remember, Eileen, that Jerry has a few explanations to make.

JERRY. Quite a few. Shall I make them now—or am I interrupting?

MRS. D. You are interrupting—most decidedly. Return to the garage where you belong.

JERRY. But I don't belong in the garage. (*Advances.*) In reality, I am your neighbor, Donald Jerome.

MRS. D. *Donald Jerome?*

JERRY. And I have in my possession an official document which belongs to you. (*Comes down center and hands envelope to MRS. DEERING. Returns and stands at BLAIR's left.*)

MRS. D. (*examining the envelope*). This is not mine.

WHITNEY. Then may I examine it? (*She hands it to him, he breaks the seal and on opening it reveals blue prints.*) Just as I suspected—the missing treasure. Now, Mr. Jerome, will you kindly inform me just where you found this?

JERRY (*pointing*). In that small room—off there.

WHITNEY. And what were you doing in that room?

EILEEN. I'll answer that question. For I pushed him into the room and locked the door.

MRS. D. *You* pushed Jerry into the room?

EILEEN. Of course I did. I thought he was the highwayman and I didn't want him to be caught.

MRS. D. Why should you think him the highwayman?

EILEEN. Well I just did—that's all.

JERRY. Let me tell the story from that point. After the door was locked, I began to investigate my surroundings as well as I could. Feeling along the wall, my hand in some way must have touched a hidden combination—for the panel began to move. I struck a match—and found the envelope. (*Pauses.*) I found more.

WHITNEY. And what?

JERRY. That beyond the panel there was a passage of some sort. I crawled through—shut the panel behind me—followed the passage—and came out in the lane back of the house.

BLAIR. All of which explains Von Holz's mysterious escape. (*Turns to JERRY.*) And to you belongs the honor of unravelling the tangle in which we found ourselves enmeshed.

JERRY. I am glad to be of service—even unintentionally.

WHITNEY. So—Tevis—by a turn of the wheel of chance, the prize escapes you.

CECILE. And by another turn of the same wheel of chance—we escape you. For—Mr. Whitney—we are still within the law.

MARION. No charge must come from this household, Mr. Whitney. I insist. By all of us the matter is regarded as merely an unfortunate episode—and it will soon be forgotten.

WHITNEY. There must be an investigation at headquarters, Miss Deering, for there are other inquiries to be made. But—beyond that—there will probably be nothing. (*Turns.*) Come—both of you! We must be starting. (*Goes to doorway.*)

TEVIS (*crossing to Mrs. DEERING*). Can you pardon me? (*Holds out his hand. She turns her head away.*) Natalie? (*She makes no sign.*) I'm sorry. (*Joins WHITNEY at doorway.*)

CECILE (*at center*). Don't be a goose, Natalie—and be thankful that you escaped. For even if I were not in your way, your baby face could never have held him. (*Looks around.*) Dear me! What a serious company! Is it all for me? And is my farewell to be that of the virtuous look, the exemplary warning and the self-satisfied attitude? (*Laughs.*) Spare me! For my beautiful iridescent bubble of a world is giving me just what I want—and if the bubble burst—what then? (*Turns.*) Mr. Blair—your arm! (*With BLAIR she goes off at doorway.*)

MRS. D. (*quietly*). Natalie, you must rest, dear. (*They cross to stairway.*)

MARION. And is there nobody—whom you wish—with you?

NATALIE (*turning*). Nobody—but Bobby. Oh, Marion, will you send Bobby to me?

MARION. I will—oh I will! (*Goes out at doorway.*)

(NATALIE and MRS. DEERING *ascend the stairs.*)

JERRY. Eileen, I stand before you—a reformed man!

EILEEN. Jerry, you're making fun of me. (*Sits on arm of chair by table.*)

JERRY. Making fun of you! I'm trying to demonstrate the success of your course in respectability.

EILEEN. But you deceived me.

JERRY. That was the easiest way to be near you.

EILEEN (*sighing*). And, after all, you turn out to be somebody entirely different.

JERRY. I believe you're disappointed.

EILEEN. Well—criminals *are* interesting.

JERRY (*suddenly*). Then—hands up! (*He points an imaginary revolver.* EILEEN *holds up her hands.*) Stand and deliver!

EILEEN. Deliver—what?

JERRY. Yourself.

EILEEN. And—to whom?

JERRY. To the highwayman. (*Draws her to him.*) Listen, dear. There's a perfectly good and respectable parent of mine waiting for you—out there. May I take you to him?

EILEEN (*mischievously*). Isn't a highwayman accustomed to take whatever's handed to him? (*Holds up her face.*)

JERRY (*as he kisses her*). He is! (*They run off at doorway.*)

Stage clear for a moment, then MARION enters with BOBBY from doorway.

MARION. Now, hurry, dear—and remember first of all—that mother needs you. (*BOBBY starts up stairway—then turns and comes slowly back to her.*)

BOBBY. Aren't *you* going to need me any more, Aunt Marion?

MARION (*holding out her arms*). Always, Bobby, always. (*After a moment he turns and goes quickly upstairs.*)

MARION *crosses to piano bench and seats herself.*
BLAIR *enters from doorway.*

MARION (*in surprise*). I thought you had gone with Mr. Whitney.

BLAIR. Only to the car. I came back to make my own confession. (*Stands at her left.*)

MARION. Haven't we had quite enough confessions as it is?

BLAIR. Perhaps. They are sad but necessary things.

MARION. I'm very happy today.

BLAIR. And why?

MARION. Natalie has asked for Bobby.

BLAIR. At last?

MARION. At last. I can't help but feel that it is Bob speaking to her—

BLAIR. Although she does not realize it.

MARION. So much has happened, Sheridan, since the Voice came. So much of real joy.

BLAIR (*after a pause*). Marion, I have not been quite frank with you. Even the name you call me is not my own.

MARION. You are not Sheridan Blair?

BLAIR. Only as I have the right to claim my grandfather's name.

MARION. Then—who are you?

BLAIR. Someone who loved you before he ever saw you—someone who knew you through your letters to his—friend.

MARION (*slowly*). You — are — John — Carey?
(*Rises.*)

BLAIR. I am John Carey—Bob's best friend. You would not let me come to you as I wished; accordingly I was forced to choose my own way. (*Pauses.*) May I say more?

MARION. Yes.

BLAIR. I met—and knew—Jane Carroll—overseas. After Bob's death she realized my longing for you—and offered to help. When personal pleas proved unavailing, she learned of this nearby house. I obtained it—and, through her, found an excuse to meet you. Am I forgiven?

MARION. There is nothing to forgive.

BLAIR. Then—is there something to—hope for?

(*They stand in silence for a moment. Then, THE VOICE speaks from the vicinity of the stairs.*)

THE VOICE. Jack! Sis! Why can't you understand? Why are you waiting?

MARION. You hear?

BLAIR. Yes—I hear.

THE VOICE. Don't you realize that your love for each other means my greatest happiness? (MARION goes to BLAIR.) For—out of the stillness—comes my blessing!

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